



PAVEE

PAVEE POINT Quarterly Newsletter



Moving forward on Drugs
Merchants Quay
A Great day in Court in West Cork

Drugs Edition



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Editorial

Pavee Point has always endeavoured to address sensitive and difficult community issues in the course of its work over the last twenty years. This year our drugs project, The Traveller

Specific Drugs Initiative is five years in existence and as such it is timely that this edition of our newsletter is devoted to the theme of drugs.



Moving Forward Drugs Conference delegates.

In Ireland today drug use is prevalent in all our communities. Prescription drug use, alcohol use, cocaine, hash and a range of other drugs have an impact on our communities. The complexities of drug use and the possible negative consequences of drugs and drug use on an already marginalised community such as the Traveller community necessitate a more rounded analysis and we hope that this issue of our newsletter will influence that analysis. The effects of drug use on a community already experiencing racism and discrimination on a daily basis and the concurrent experience of drugs and drug related issues at a Traveller community level, have not been explored in depth in Ireland to date. In the article on Racism, Social Exclusion and drug use by the Traveller Specific Drugs Initiative, some of these issues are addressed.

All of us who work in Traveller organisations are aware that the issue of drugs has grown over the last ten years and we are now at an important juncture when there are opportunities to progress this work. Increasingly more Traveller organisations are working on the issue of drugs and in parallel the National Drug Strategy Team are prioritising Travellers as part of their remit. The National Advisory

Committee on Drugs research on Travellers will be completed before the end of the year, it is hoped this research will inform policy and practice on drug issues in relation to Travellers. Finally, there is a clear need to build on the positive response to the Moving Forward conference hosted by the TSDI in April this

year, through collaborative working between Traveller organisations at both a local and national level and drug service providers and policy makers.

The articles in this edition reflect the following;

- The perspective of the TSDI itself
- The Traveller Community perspective
- The role of drug services in supporting Travellers who are drug users
- The role of national drug policy in ensuring Traveller inclusion in the National Drug Strategy

We hope that the experience of Pavee Point and the other organisations, who have contributed to this newsletter will inform debate and discussion and that the next phase of this work will support the challenge of addressing the issue of drugs within the Traveller community, in a positive way.

Ronnie Fay
 Director

Exploring ways to **'Move Forward'** on the Drugs Issue

On April 18th the Traveller Specific Drugs Initiative hosted the conference 'Moving Forward: Exploring Responses to Drug Issues in the Traveller Community', in the Royal Dublin Hotel.

The day long event was designed to open up discussion on the issue of drugs within the Traveller Community, to look at what the current situation and responses are, to learn about initiatives being implemented elsewhere, and as stated in the title of the conference, to discuss how to 'move forward' in relation to the issue.



NHS Trust. Both speakers have experience working with Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) communities, including Travellers. The presentations outlined frameworks used in addressing the drugs issue with BME communities in the UK (e.g. community engagement), experiences and outcomes from the work and advice for developing a response to the drugs issue with Travellers in Ireland.

The conference was attended by 120 participants and brought together representatives from many different sectors including; Traveller organisations, drug outreach workers, health services representatives, Local and Regional Drug Task Forces, community, voluntary and statutory drug service providers and policy makers, etc.

The chair for the morning Martin Collins (Assistant Director, Pavee Point), set the tone for the day by emphasising how the increase in drug use and drug addiction are among the biggest challenges facing Travellers over the next ten to fifteen years, and stressed that action needs to be taken.

The key-note speakers for the day were Kate Davies from the Centre for Ethnic Health at the University of Lancashire and Donnamarie Donnelly from the 'Face It' project, Nottinghamshire Healthcare

Other speakers for the day included Deirdre McCarthy (researcher), who presented an evaluation of a pilot capacity building training programme that was developed and delivered by the TSDI, while Sinead Smith, Coordinator of the TSDI, outlined the vision of the TSDI in responding to the issue of drugs within the Traveller Community.

Roundtable discussions gave conference participants the opportunity to contribute their views and to discuss the issues most relevant to them. Topics included: how Traveller inclusion can be promoted in local and national drug policy and structures, the challenge of raising awareness of drugs and drug related issues within the Traveller community in a culturally appropriate way, the role of Traveller organisations in developing a response, and exploring models of good practice in drug service provision.

In his closing remarks, the chair of the conference for the afternoon, Gerry McAleenan (Head of Services, Soilse), stated the conference was a 'watershed'. This is an apt description, as the conference brought many different sectors together to discuss the issue of Travellers and drug use and to explore possible answers and solutions. The conference also conveyed a clear message that drug services providers, policy makers and Traveller organisations are looking for similar things; they want to support Traveller inclusion across the spectrum of drug issues. However, how this can be done in a culturally appropriate and inclusive way still needs more analysis, time and investment. As Gerry McAleenan asserted, *"the onus now is on Travellers and those who vindicate their rights to become involved and ensure inclusive planning results in sustainable development, that the Traveller community is the subject and not the object of change. On the flip side service providers and policy makers need to meet the commitment of Traveller organisations with positive responses and actions to ensure Traveller inclusion across all the pillars of the National Drug Strategy"*.

The 'Moving Forward' conference may indeed represent a significant change, but the discussion must not end at the roundtables or within the conference hall, the discussion must continue and action must take place and be supported in order to truly and appropriately 'move forward'.

The TSDI would like to thank everyone who attended the conference and all those who gave their time, energy and support on the day. A full conference report is available from the Pavee Point website: www.paveepoint.ie

Beginning the Journey

A Capacity Building Training Programme

From October 2004 until February 2005 the Traveller Specific Drugs Initiative, with funding from Combat Poverty Agency under the Building Healthy Communities Fund, developed and piloted a capacity building training programme entitled; *'Beginning the Journey: Developing a Community Response to Drug Issues within the Traveller Community'*.

The overall aim of the training was, "to develop a culturally appropriate training package for Traveller organisations. The focus was to enhance community participation and the skills and knowledge of Travellers and Traveller organisations on drug issues and drug related structures, thereby ensuring quality outcomes from all relevant drug policies and practices developed".

The idea to develop a capacity building programme came about as a response to local Traveller groups who were concerned that the drugs issue was increasingly presenting in their work, but they did not feel they had the adequate skills, information or resources to begin to tackle this relatively new issue in the Traveller community.

In developing the training the 'newness' of the drugs issue for the Traveller Community was taken into account, and crucially, also was the understanding that any response to drug issues in the Traveller Community must also address the underlying causes of social exclusion i.e. racism, discrimination, early school leaving, accommodation, health and other social determinants.

With this in mind the training outline was as follows:

- Awareness raising on drug issues in the Traveller community
- Developing the analysis of drug issues in the context of health inequalities, social exclusion, racism and discrimination, the social determinants of health
- Community mobilisation: Tools for Engagement
- Models of good practice in working with Black, minority ethnic groups: national and international examples.
- Policy development and policy structures on drug issues in Ireland e.g. the RDTF
- Networking: building links and alliances with community networks who work on drug related issues.
- Developing organisational strategies and responses within local Traveller organisations
- Evaluation and dissemination of the lessons learned

The training took place in Dublin over eight full days (two days a month) from October to February. The training was attended by fourteen participants (thirteen female, one male) from varying parts of the country including Donegal, Kerry and

Waterford. In total nine of the group were Travellers and five were settled people who work for Traveller organisations. The facilitation of the training was led by the TSDI Pavee Point, and was complemented by presentations and group-work sessions carried out by a number of guest trainers. A variety of methodologies were used in delivering the training.

An essential part of piloting the training package was to incorporate an evaluation as an ongoing part of the process. The results of the evaluation show that despite some difficulties around travel and childcare, participants really enjoyed the training and felt that the training had provided them with individual outcomes. In general it was felt that practical skills were gained in community development and participants felt better able to raise the issue of drugs among members of their community. Positive feedback from the training was evident in statements made to the evaluator during interviews following the training; "Wouldn't have missed it for the world, it gave me huge amount of confidence"; "The fact that there were a lot of Travellers participating was a great support"; "I loved it"; "Learnt that more and more Travellers are willing to come forward and discuss the issue"; "the opportunity for Travellers to

network on the issue was superb, in particular when Travellers are so often in denial (about the drugs issue)"

Although the individual impact of the training is in no doubt, the organisational impact is more difficult to gauge, particularly so soon after the training. However, a number of organisations represented on the training have initiated work around drugs following the training, such as formalising links with drugs

structures in their areas and delivering training on drugs to other programmes within their organisation (i.e. youth and Primary Health Care programmes). As one participant stated, 'It was good to have so much to bring back to the community'.

The evaluation of 'Beginning the Journey' was presented by the researcher Deirdre McCarthy at the 'Moving Forward' Conference held by the TSDI in April 2005. A number of the trainees from the capacity building training facilitated round-table discussions at the conference on a range of topics relating to Travellers and the drugs issue.

The TSDI are currently reviewing and updating the 'Beginning the Journey' capacity building training.

The complete evaluation of the 'Beginning the Journey' Capacity Building Training is available from the Traveller Specific Drugs Initiative, e-mail: drugsawareness@pavee.iol.ie



Training Programme participants.

Promoting Intercultural and Anti racist Drug Services for Travellers and other Minority Ethnic Groups



A case study

Merchants Quay Ireland (MQI) works with homeless people and drug users. We work for positive social change to combat poverty and social exclusion which lie at the root of problem drug use and homelessness. Our services include needle exchange services, health promotion services and primary healthcare services, as well as day support programmes, settlement and integration services and residential programmes. In 2004 we worked with over 1,800 people who were homeless and over 4,000 drug users.

At MQI we welcome people who find it hard to fit into services elsewhere. We provide open access/low threshold services aiming to minimise the barriers that may exist when accessing our services. However, hard-to-reach drug users including members of the Traveller community, people from new communities, female drug users and people with disabilities do not always fully utilise our services thus we are currently exploring how to further develop our services so they can be reached by all groups in Irish society.

There are a number of barriers to accessing drug services which may be experienced by hard to reach groups. Recent research, funded by the National Advisory Committee on Drugs and undertaken by MQI, exploring problematic drug use among new communities in Ireland¹ found that the obstacles for ethnic minorities in accessing drug services included

- Fear of encountering racism, either by clients or workers,
- Lack of knowledge of drug services,
- Difficulty accessing information in their own language,
- Fear of stigma and breaches of confidentiality
- Suspicion of drugs services and their workers.

The experience of frontline staff in Merchant's Quay Ireland working and interacting with drug using Travellers has indicated that the following are some of the key issues for this group

- There is a double-stigma of being a Traveller and a drug user and this seems to discourage many from accessing services although a minority do utilise our primary health care and needle exchange services.

- Anecdotal feedback from staff in our services suggests that drug use is often hidden by Travellers within their own community and the barriers to engaging with drug services are likely to be similar to some of those identified above.
- Within our services, Travellers rarely engage in longer term options such as stabilisation and treatment services. This may indicate that other supports are needed to encourage them to use these services, and/or that other suitable services may need to be developed.

There is a challenge for drug service providers to ensure that their services are appropriate for, and accessible to, hidden and hard to reach drug users. Access to services such as healthcare is a matter of basic human rights regulated within the framework of International Law. In addition, the National Action Plan Against Racism refers to the accommodation of diversity in service provision including health, educational and social services as one of their key themes. This highlights the role of the drug service provider in pro-actively engaging with issues of diversity amongst various marginalised groups.

Addressing these issues requires a multi-faceted approach, involving drug service

providers, Traveller organisations and other groups working in this area. With regard to the Traveller population, the stigma of drug use within the Traveller community needs to be tackled, and information made available regarding drug service provision.

To encourage intercultural service delivery drugs services need to

- Develop policies embracing diversity and challenging racism
- Provide anti-racist training for staff and clients in drugs services
- Produce culturally sensitive material clearly highlighting the confidentiality of and range of services provided.

In addition, information and training that enables service providers to better understand the specific needs of the drug-using Traveller would ensure that services are working to meet these needs.

It is important that drug service providers, Traveller organisations and those working with other minority groups work together to address these issues. To this end MQI and Pavee Point have an ongoing working relationship which allows both organisations to benefit from the knowledge, expertise and experiences of the other and to work in partnership in addressing problem drug use among Travellers and other minority ethnic groups.

¹ **Corr, C. 2004.** "Drug use among new communities in Ireland: An exploratory study". Dublin: National Advisory Committee on Drugs.

A Great Day in Court

Kevin McCaughey, West Cork Traveller Centre



Tuesday 19th July was a day to savour for three young women in Clonakilty, County Cork. On that day, their right to be served in a local pub was vindicated, their good name cleared and the owners of the Galley bar in the main street of Clonakilty found guilty of discrimination.

In October last year, Mary and Michelle O'Driscoll were refused entry to the Galley bar and refused a reason when they asked for one. The next morning, Mary's sister went down to the premises and asked for a reason as to why they were treated the way they were. Again, none was offered and Kathleen was asked to leave the bar.

The three women went up to the West Cork Traveller Centre where they wrote letters to the bar owners telling them of their experience and asking for a reason as to why they were barred. They received no reply to their letters.

'It was only then that we decided to look at using the courts to clear our names', explains Kathleen O'Driscoll, one of the three Travellers involved.

The three women contacted Eamonn Carroll, a solicitor from Cork, and he agreed to take on their case.

It took nine months for the case to be decided on but the three women persevered and eventually succeeded.

The Galley bar was ordered by the judge to write letters of apology to the women involved and pay their costs.

This judgement sends a clear signal to all businesses in west Cork, including vintners, that the Equal Status Act of 2000 applies to everyone and any breaches of the law can and will be challenged in the courts.

After the government removed the adjudication of such cases from the Equality Tribunal to the District court system in 2003, the vintners may have felt that the Equality legislation no longer applied to them, but this verdict is a reminder to them that all of their customers must be treated fairly and equally. Otherwise, there will be more cases taken and more vintners in court.

This is an opportunity for all local businesses to look at their obligations under the Equality legislation and make sure that their customers are protected.

A lot of credit is due to the young women involved who had to struggle hard to take on this case in the first place and then see it through to the end. It was not easy but in

this case at least, their work was worth it and the local business found guilty of the offence and the women vindicated.

It is an important victory and one that should be celebrated by everyone involved in human rights and equality work. It should serve as an inspiration and encouragement to all others who suffer in the same way.

In this case, the judge made the significant decision to believe that, in all probability, the three women were treated the way they were because they were Travellers and for no other reason. This judgement contrasts starkly with other judgements in other jurisdictions when the court has more often than not refused to believe that the complainants were treated any different because they were Travellers.

It indicates that the dispensing of justice depends to a large degree on what judge is presiding and shows one of the major difficulties facing people who want to challenge discrimination in the District court.

"ITM is delighted to hear the outcome of the case in Cork and congratulates the women involved. However, this case is an exception and ITM is aware of a number of cases in the Dublin area where discrimination was not found although there was no other plausible reason for a refusal of service. **Without the investigative role of the Equality Tribunal, and the added inhibiting factor of legal cost, the case in West Cork will remain the exception rather than the rule. ITM believes the Intoxicating Liquor Act 2003 will ultimately be challenged, as ITM and other Traveller organisations have always held the view that the law does not comply with the requirements of the European Race Directive**" states Davey Joyce of the ITM Legal Unit.

The West Cork Traveller Centre is keen to use this victory as a launch pad for more awareness work locally on equality in general and the Equality legislation in particular and plan to invite the local business community in West Cork to take part in training to inform their members and be proactive in combating discrimination.

While this case proves the rule by being the exception and points up the weaknesses in the system for accessing justice, it was, nevertheless, a good day for Travellers, for equality and for the court system.

Racism, Social Exclusion and Drug Use

A Framework to Address Drug Issues in the Traveller Community

Travellers as members of a minority ethnic group in Ireland experience marginalisation and social exclusion as a result of racism. It is acknowledged and accepted in Ireland that drug issues are concentrated within communities that are disadvantaged and socially excluded. This article is written in the context of the work of the Traveller Specific Drugs Initiative and reflects our experience in working with the Traveller Community on drug issues and Pavee Point's broader work on anti racism. We hope our experience can contribute to wider discussions on drug issues within other minority ethnic communities. In writing this article on drugs and drug use (the term 'drugs' will be inclusive of alcohol throughout the article as the project includes both issues in its remit), racism, social exclusion and the Traveller community is the framework through which our analysis is presented.

The intersection of racism, social exclusion and drug use are powerful determinants of the status of Travellers in Ireland today. Travellers experience racism on a daily basis and for some members of the community drugs, are a direct daily experience, whilst for others they are an indirect experience in their community. This is in so far as they are affected by other members of their community's drug use due to the fact that they may live beside drug use; be related to those using drugs or may be living with issues as a result of anti social and criminal behaviour such as the dealing of drugs.

Racism, Social Exclusion and Drug use – the Challenge Ahead

Travellers are often excluded from debate on drug use within drug policy and service provision and wider discussions on the experience of communities in Ireland affected by drugs. In parallel, discourses on racism often ignore or do not consider the multi faceted impact of racism, social exclusion and drug use within minority ethnic communities. These intersections have not resulted in consideration or debate in Ireland in 2005. It is important to acknowledge, however, that neither the anti racist movement nor the drugs

services operate in a vacuum and they are open to a range of influences. In this article the intersections that will be focused on are race, social exclusion and drug use. Other factors that are not discussed in depth in this article and that need further consideration are gender and youth.

Over the last two years there has been an increasing willingness on behalf of the drugs structures, services and policy makers to support Travellers and Traveller organisations to respond to the issue of drugs. However, this has at times been ad hoc, piecemeal and frequently replicating what works or what is deemed to work within the settled community. It has also been dependent on the individual good will of particular service providers or local drug structures. Drugs services should be striving to develop strategies and approaches that focus on the specific needs of Travellers within an anti racist framework, which would provide a space for Traveller involvement in future discussions about responses to drug issues in the Traveller community and in Ireland.

In terms of the anti racism movement the analysis on racism, social exclusion and drug use is under developed and knowledge of the impact of drug use on minority ethnic groups in Ireland is

limited. The following quote from a respondent to the European Monitoring Centre on Drugs and Drug Addiction, survey *Mapping Available Information on 'Minorities' across 15 EU Member States* conveys these limitations:

“One of the problems of looking at drug use in the ethnic context is the problem of racism. There has been a noticeable rise in public utterances and displays of racism in Ireland in the last few years although allegations of drug misuse have not been a prominent feature of the invective...it could also be that an excessive desire to avoid or eliminate racism and discrimination may lead some to ignore, deny or overlook drug misuse in ethnic communities [In addition] data collection in certain subject areas has been neglected for many years due to budgetary and other constraints. This has begun to be rectified over the last five years or so, but there are still deficiencies with fundamentals such as baseline data and compatible computer systems.” (EMCDDA, p153, 2003)

It is important to note that this survey only had a 19.5% response rate in 2002 and that our knowledge and information about the issue of drugs within minority ethnic communities has moved on somewhat. This is due in part to research carried out by drug services such as Merchant's Quay's Ireland entitled, *Drug use among new communities in Ireland, an exploratory study*. However there still remain a lot of gaps in information as the report cited; "more in depth research should be carried out on the link between ethnicity, social exclusion and drug use." (Corr, C. 2004 p13)

Whilst acknowledging the huge amount and range of work being carried out by agencies working with minority ethnic communities, we believe it is now an opportune time for the anti racism movement to engage in debate and discussion on this issue. The challenge to the anti racism sector is for us to come together, be open and frank about the current drug situation and to work in collaboration to develop strategies and responses to address the drug related issues in the communities we work with. This in turn will lead to greater supports and solidarity between community development organisations and a collective voice.

Addressing issues of Stigma in relation to drug use in the Traveller Community

Within minority ethnic communities and other vulnerable groups the level of drug use is in many cases lower than that of the majority population. This does not correlate however with a more positive response from society to these communities and can paradoxically result in an attitude that drugs do not exist in such communities, or if they do then these communities can deal with it themselves as they 'look after their own' (Khan, 2005). The stigma attached to drug use and the impact of drug use on groups already discriminated against, such as Travellers, can be an inhibiting factor to addressing the issue of drugs. This is why Travellers are in some cases reluctant to speak openly about what is happening in their community as discourses on 'Travellers' could become constructed as discourses on 'Traveller drug users'. In the UK, Kohn (1992) points out "displacement from one discourse to the other in popular and populist consciousness is as simple as that from 'black' to 'crack'", as in the case of the Afro Caribbean community there. Concurrently, myths around particular characteristics and culture of that community may even perpetuate ideas on those 'supposed' community traits being responsible for drug use. It is important that discussions on drug use and Travellers do not result in further stigmatisation for Travellers.

Many Travellers openly discuss the need for a response to drug issues within their community; others would not feel so confident to do so. In the domain of a local Traveller organisation Travellers may feel safe to discuss the issue of drugs within their community, however, at a wider community level, this is not yet the case. This reluctance reflects the newness of the issue and that further work needs to be carried out to support the development of a community response to drugs. Travellers are concerned about drug use in their community, but they are also worried about the stigma, shame and silence that surround drug use, as one participant at a recent conference hosted by the TSDI stated:

"How do we raise awareness around the issue of drugs within the Traveller community without adding to the stigma or without making life more difficult for Travellers?" (TSDI Moving Forward conference, 2005)

A Community Development Response to the Issue of Drugs

Over the last four to five years Travellers have begun to discuss how the issue of drugs is impacting on their community. The daily oppression and denial of Traveller culture along with what Traveller leader Martin Collins has termed 'the impact of drugs on Travellers sense of themselves' and their 'cultural esteem,' coupled with the potential damage that drugs can cause and are causing, has been a topic high on the agenda of many Traveller leaders and organisations.

The drugs issue is relatively new within the Traveller community in comparison to the settled community. This point is important for a number of reasons. Communities who face drug use move through different stages of response from denial, to ad hoc responses, (in some cases vigilantism) and finally to the development of a community response. It is important to state that one is not dependant on the other or sequential. Therefore giving time to the development of a response is vital, while, facilitating and supporting this to happen is also imperative. Traveller organisations play a key role in ensuring this happens within the Traveller community.

Traveller organisations are beginning to develop organisational responses to the issue of drugs and many are working with Traveller communities locally to raise awareness of drugs and drug related issues in a more proactive manner. Traveller involvement in drugs work is central and Traveller organisations should be supported to address the issue of drugs, in the context of their other work with the Traveller community as community development organisations. Community Development projects that address drug issues and have a drugs focus to them within the Traveller community, come in many shapes and forms e.g. drug education for young Travellers, youth development projects working with young Traveller males, drug awareness programmes for Traveller parents and projects with Traveller peer outreach workers working with Travellers who are drug users and their families. Some Traveller organisations have drug projects working on the issue of drugs and some of these roles are fulfilled by Travellers. Discussion needs to take place with Traveller groups locally as to the best and most appropriate strategies to move forward.

The Role of Local and Regional Drug Task Forces

Local and Regional Drug Task Forces must work closely with Traveller organisations to ensure that local responses to drug issues are inclusive of Travellers and that local Traveller groups are supported as community organisations to address the drugs issue in the context in which they work. To date there have been gaps in the responses of the LDTF and RDTF

structures on a number of counts; Travellers are only represented on a minority of LDTF and RDTF structures; Local Area Action plans for these structures are only beginning to include actions relating to Travellers and the National Drug Strategy only mentions Travellers in relation to research in one action. There are positive changes too, however, the National Drug Strategy Team have worked closely with us in Pavee Point to ensure some of the following actions take place: Travellers are now a target group for both the Local and Regional Drug Task Forces, links between LDTFs and Traveller groups are beginning to be made in cases where previously there were none, more Traveller groups are being supported to come onto the local drug structures as community representatives to ensure their views are being brought to the table, and finally more Traveller groups are being resourced to address the issue of drugs within their community. A number of recommendations in relation to the work of the LDTF and RDTF are made in the conclusions section of this article.

The Experience of Travellers who are Drug Users

“Within the drugs field there is still a tendency to individualise problems and pay little attention to structural and social justice issues such as gender, class, ethnicity, poverty and racism. One important issue is that problematic alcohol [drugs and drug use also] use is often a response to poverty, unemployment and racism and other forms of disadvantage and discrimination. However, the implications of such structural factors are complex.”
(Raven, 1997)

For Travellers who are drug users, they live within two spheres; the community sphere and the drugs sphere. There have been many changes in the profile of Travellers who are drug users over the last five to ten years and as a minority within a minority they are not a homogenous group. Travellers who are drug users experience discrimination as Travellers and discrimination as drug users. Traveller women who are drug users will experience many of the issues that other women who are drug users face, along with the added dimension of racism. Travellers who are drug users are not using drug services for a range of reasons, not least of which are issues of stigma and shame. Barriers exist within the Traveller community and externally for Travellers who are drug users. Drug use is often not seen as acceptable within the Traveller community, often Travellers who do go to services go in an area away from where they live so people won't know who they are. Finally, the daily experience of Travellers in Ireland is one of discrimination and this impacts on their use of drug services and how services perceive them. Issues such as lack of trust, confidentiality, shame and welfare needs are cited by Travellers who are drug users as barriers to accessing services. Travellers who are drug users are not visible within drug services, as a result harm reduction messages are often not reaching Travellers. In some cases Travellers who are injecting drug users are not accessing needle exchanges and outreach

services. There is a lack of information on drug services, where they are, what they do and how they operate. Traveller families are finding there is no space for them in terms of support as parents or siblings of drug users. Travellers can be 'blamed' for not fitting into services, seen as difficult clients etc. The operational structure of drug services in Ireland can act as a barrier in terms of equality of access, participation and outcomes e.g. requirements of a geographical address to access services, the levels of literacy required to fill in forms, a lack of flexibility as to how and where services are delivered and ultimately services are not culturally appropriate for Travellers who are drug users. Drug services need to ensure that they are anti-racist, culturally appropriate and meeting the needs of Travellers who are drug users within an equality framework.

The Role of Travellers as Peer Drug Workers within drug services

Travellers should and can play a role as peer workers in their own community through local Traveller organisations or in the role of service providers within drug services. In the work of the TSDI we have seen the benefits of Travellers taking on key roles as Peer Drug workers in their community. As a targeted initiative being supported by local Traveller groups, Local Drug Task Forces and the National Drug Strategy Team, the outcomes are clear. We know it works and we know that in order to address the issue of drugs within the Traveller community these responses should be fostered. We would urge the following to be taken into account:

1. Travellers who are peer workers in generic drug services should be supported to work with all clients in that service,
2. Drug services taking on workers from minority ethnic communities must make a commitment to developing an anti racist service and finally
3. A targeted response such as this should be monitored and evaluated to ensure it is making an impact and that mainstream responses are happening in tandem.

Studies in the UK have shown that, very often workers from minority ethnic communities have been isolated within drug services dealt only with clients from their own communities and were perceived by their community in many cases as the service. Often issues of institutional racism were ignored, and in fact perpetuated and reinforced by having a segregated service within a service which resulted in “the (no doubt unintended) effect to defocus from institutional racism and the measures needed to counter it”, (Khan, 2005). This manifests itself by shifting the responsibility of Travellers who are drug users to Traveller workers, whilst ignoring the need for systemic change within the drug services and structures and their responsibility to the Traveller community as service users. In Ireland we should learn from these lessons and put real thought and consideration into how targeted and mainstream approaches should work, while building on the lessons from the existing work of Traveller organisations and work in other countries with minority ethnic communities to ensure we meet the needs of Travellers who are drug users.

Section 8 Challenges and Conclusions

Key challenges listed below form a framework through which we would recommend the drugs issue within the Traveller community should be addressed; anti racist drug strategies; the provision of intercultural and anti racist drug service, inclusive policy development and finally Traveller organisations playing a key role in this work.

1. Anti Racist Drug Strategies

- All drug services should develop and adopt anti racist and equality codes of practice and policy and all staff within drug services should receive anti racist training which would include training on the Equal Status Act
- The National Drug Strategy should be equality proofed under the 100 actions
- Travellers should be represented and supported on Local and Regional Drug Task Forces that are implementing actions on drugs in relation to Travellers
- Local and Regional Drug Task Forces, the National Drug Strategy and other commissioning agencies need to ensure that at all stages the needs of all communities (including Travellers) underpin community consultations, representation, action plans, delivery of services, monitoring and evaluation; this should not be negotiable
- All drug policy documents should be inclusive of the needs of Travellers and other minority ethnic groups i.e. equality proofed

2. Traveller Inclusion in Policy Development and Research

- That Travellers be recognised as a minority ethnic group
- That the recommendations of the National Advisory Committee on Drugs' research project on the nature and extent of drug use in the Traveller community be implemented
- All research on drugs should be inclusive of Travellers

3. Provision of Intercultural Drug Services

- The reorientation of drug services to be more inclusive and the equality proofing all services from commissioning to delivery of services
- The applying of Universal ethnic monitoring within a Human Rights Framework. This would be the use of a system of ethnic identifiers to identify everyone according to ethnicity on health recording systems such as the National Drug Treatment Reporting System being instigated. The collection of such figures would alongside other information assist in the planning of services, identification of gaps in provision, and be a tool for monitoring and evaluating progress
- The development of services that are client centred, flexible in their approach [including low threshold] and outreach initiatives to target services for Travellers who are drug users, which would enhance access to mainstream provision
- The promotion and development of peer approaches with Travellers as delivers of services where it is deemed necessary and appropriate

4. Traveller Organisations

- Traveller organisations developing organisational strategies to address the issue of drugs locally
- The need for awareness raising and a safe space for Travellers to discuss the issue of drugs

- The development of a Community response to drug issues through community development processes
- The need for Travellers to be advocates in their own community on the issue of drugs
- The resourcing of Traveller organisations to address drug issues at a local level by Local and Regional Drug Task Forces

In this article we have addressed the issue of drugs in the context of racism and social exclusion. We have used the language of equality and anti racism. In the drugs field at present there is an increasing focus on a rights based approach, this combined with equality and anti racism should be the framework out of which drug issues in Ireland are addressed. At a community level, Travellers recognise the complexities of opening up the debate on drugs in a sensitive way, however, this should not paralyse us into inaction particularly in light of fact that the sense of urgency of the issue is palpable and Travellers know this. Concurrently, whilst recognising there are Travellers who are drug users in crisis situations and that they need to be supported, it is important that thought and planning takes place in order to ensure that responses are matching the need on the ground. Traveller organisations are willing to address the issue of drugs and contrary to some negative commentaries that Traveller groups may not want to work on the difficult issues; our experience would show that this is not the case.

Finally, it has to be acknowledged, as it was at the Moving Forward Conference in April of this year, that in order to address drug issues, many Travellers and Traveller organisations stated again and again that real strides must be taken to address racism, discrimination, unemployment, education, accommodation issues and health inequalities for Travellers. The issue of drugs cannot be examined in isolation; it must and should take place in the context of the ongoing racism and social exclusion that shape the lives and experiences of Travellers in Ireland. Strategies and policies that don't do so will mean a discriminated and marginalised Traveller community continuing to be at risk from drug use.

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On the Ground ...

Responding to the drugs issue

Over the last number of years drugs are increasingly on the agenda for Traveller organisations. The following piece outlines two different types of responses to the drugs issue as currently being carried out by two Traveller organisations in Dublin: Trav Act and Exchange House.



Davey Joyce, a member of the Traveller community, was employed by Trav Act (formally Northside Travellers

Support Group) as a Drugs Outreach worker in March 2004, following receipt of funding from Dublin North-East Drugs Task Force.

Davey explains that when Trav Act sought funding for the position of a drugs outreach worker, there was a real need in the Coolock/Darndale area for the issue of drugs to be addressed. It had become a priority due to the large numbers of Travellers living in the area and the fact that generic responses by differing services to the drugs issue were resulting in poor outcomes for the Traveller community. Davey outlined that low levels of literacy often meant Travellers were not reading leaflets or posters, while services that expected people to come into service buildings to discuss drug issues were not an appropriate response for members of the Traveller community. A different method of addressing the issue was needed.

Since taking up the post a year and a half ago Davey feels his approach has worked well, "I get out and go into the community, I go into the houses and sit down and have a cuppa and I can bring up the subject about drugs, drug awareness and drugs education, the dangers of drugs and the services that can help people". Although initially Davey states it took some members of his community a while to see and accept him in the role of

a 'drugs worker', and on the other hand that some services were surprised to see a Traveller in the position, he feels that progress has been made. Trust has been established between Davey and his clients, the word that he offers a confidential service has spread; more people, both formally and informally (such as in a social setting), are asking for advice, families are becoming more open to drug education and in general Davey feels that the community is becoming more open to discussing the issue of drugs. As Davey notes, "I think some of the parents are starting to realise that if you talk about drugs and let children know the dangers, that's helping the children, before if you mentioned drugs parents thought they (the children) might want to take it then".

However, Davey highlights that denial around drug use within Traveller families is still a big issue; families simply don't want to accept that a member of their family is using drugs and therefore won't access the appropriate support. Also Davey acknowledges the difficulties for him as a drugs worker when families of drug users do engage of his services but have unrealistic expectations from him; they expect him to provide a 'quick-fix' to their problems.

In establishing trust and making progress in his role as a drugs worker, Davey feels that being a Traveller is an important element.

Having grown up in the Traveller community he did not have to deal with the suspicion and possible rejection that a settled worker in his role might face.

As a Traveller Davey feels he is able to talk to Travellers in their own 'lingo', and importantly he is able to identify with issues of racism and discrimination that affect the Traveller community and which in some cases may result in drug use in order to 'blot out' these experiences.

In discussing drug use on the ground Davey views cocaine as the major problem. This is due to its availability and use, but also due to the miseducation around the drug; the view that cocaine is not addictive and that to be a drug user you have to use a needle. As Davey states, "**Unfortunately the Traveller Community are not getting the textbook facts, they're getting the local education of the local drug dealers and the local lads. My job is to go in and rectify that**".

In order to further address the issue of Travellers and drug use Davey would like to see more drug education for Traveller parents and more Traveller drug workers employed, especially outreach workers. He states, "If there was a few more Travellers trained as drug workers it might make it a bit easier, because I have my area here covered but unfortunately in other parts of Dublin, Travellers are on drugs, they haven't got any drugs workers who are Travellers so they have nobody that they can really confide in. You need more outreach workers. I believe myself that drug outreach workers are supplying more information than anybody else, because they're going looking for drug users; they're getting drug users that'll never walk into a building (to look for help)". Davey feels now is the

time for Travellers to take on these roles and to lead the field in their own right.

For those considering taking on such roles or an organisation considering developing such a response, Davey continues, **“My advice to another organisation who is going to take in a drugs worker who comes from a Traveller background is to get out, don’t sit behind a desk and wait for things to happen, go out and make**

things happen ... go around the sites, get known and do it on a regular basis, get involved in the Traveller youth groups and supply some education to them ... and keep on going”. Davey also highlights the need to be flexible in this work, to be open to meeting clients where and when it suits them, **“If someone wants to see me maybe five or six miles away I’ll get into the car and go over and see them, if that can help them I’ll do that”**.

Davey acknowledges, that in his work he has had, and will have, successes and difficulties, but this is the very nature of the work, the important thing is to carry on, **“Well when you start off its like having a hurdle race, you keep on coming to that barrier you just get over it, and then you get over the next one and the next one and sometimes when you think things are going good you get a knock back ... but you have to keep on going”**.

Exchange House

Richard Redmond is an addiction counsellor with the Exchange House¹ Pilot Drug Initiative which began in 2003 and is funded through the South Inner City Local Drugs Task Force. Following observational evidence from Exchange House and other Traveller organisations it was identified that a response was needed to address the growing problem of drug misuse among the Traveller community. As Richard notes, **“It was felt since Travellers were not accessing mainstream drugs services, an intervention within the Exchange House Family Support Team would allow the agency to evaluate the problem and try to develop an appropriate response”**.

The aim of the project is to pilot a response to the needs of Travellers in the South Inner City who are at risk of becoming involved in drug misuse and addiction.

In undertaking his role as an addiction counsellor Richard explains, **“Initially, it was envisaged that counselling would be provided by meeting with a client/service user in a comfortable room, with two chairs, with a session lasting no more than 45 to 50 minutes! What has come about, is that clients from the Traveller Community seem to be reluctant to enter into such a setting and so I talk with individuals where they live be it in an official halting site, at the side of the road, coffee shops or restaurants, in prison, Bed and Breakfasts or in standard**

housing. This means that the individual determines the length of time for the chat and the setting. This appears to work ... this way the individual feels in control.



Richard accepts that adopting such as outreach approach may be challenging for counsellors, as it is a far cry from the traditional counselling setting, however, he feels it is worth considering in order to reach those who do not use mainstream drug treatment services, **“This style of intervention has allowed easy access in supporting Travellers. To date some forty nine families have been involved, where close to ninety drug users from the Traveller community received one thousand face to face sessions, along with phone calls, referrals and advocacy on their behalf”**.

In working with Travellers Richard emphasises the need for a holistic approach, thereby taking into account the multitude of

issues facing Travellers in contemporary society, such as, poor and inappropriate accommodation (notably a lack of transient sites in the greater Dublin area), poverty, social and economic exclusion and the continued erosion of Traveller culture – while Travellers face prejudice, discrimination and racism on an ongoing basis. Richard acknowledges that these factors, **“may well contribute to the fact that drug use is taking hold and only goes to further isolate the most vulnerable within the Traveller community”**.

As drug use is changing within Irish society in general, Richard outlines some of the changes in the Traveller community in relation to drugs, **“Smoking hash and the use of cocaine, is a relatively new thing within the Traveller community, as indeed the use of heroin, but has in recent years been a cause of concern among Traveller organisations and community members. Drug users within the Traveller community up to recently were in the age group of 27 to 35, (and) male ... in the last year, evidence of a younger Traveller drug user population is emerging. Young people aged 16 to 19, often female”**.

Richard specifically highlights issues for Traveller females in relation to drug use, **“It is often the drug user women, mother, daughter, partner who is the most marginalised within our society and even more so if she comes from the Traveller Community. This is born out by their reluctance to access mainstream drug treatment agencies and naturally a reluctance to do so if she is a mother of young children, for fear of Social Services”**.

¹ Exchange House Travellers Service has been in operations for twenty-five years, providing family support work, Traveller youth services and educational programmes to Travellers in Dublin.

Richard explains that much of the reluctance of Traveller drug users to access support can be due the culturally inappropriate nature of many drugs services. This may come in the form of a lack of understanding of Traveller culture, gender issues for female users (if a male nurse is interviewing them), language used may alienate Travellers, as well as the fact that many Drug Treatment Agencies only treat clients from specific boundary areas, thus not taking into consideration issues such as nomadism. Richard further adds that long waiting lists can be a deterrent for many Travellers attempting to enter Drug Treatment Centres. For the above reasons Richard notes, *“One of the big challenges for me in the last three years has been the making of appropriate referrals for drug using Travellers”*.

Exchange House take the above issues on board in working with Traveller drug users, as Richard states, *“Clients will engage in a project like Exchange House as they feel a degree of trust with the organisation and*

the staff there. Many of the clients who are attending for counselling have not accessed mainstream drug services and are reluctant to do so. With support, more and more are expressing a willingness to try out mainstream services. However, support will be required on an ongoing basis at all stages of treatment. With a multidisciplinary team available, Exchange House have a broad range of supports available, such as welfare rights information, social work, etc., thereby supporting the person, and other issues in their lives, and not just addressing the addiction.

Among other point, issues which Richard feels drugs services need to consider include:

- Equality and awareness of cultural diversity
- Awareness of Traveller issues (including the role and function of the extended family)
- A client focused approach – including assured confidentiality

- Consultation with Travellers to ensure services are ‘Traveller friendly’
- Traveller involvement in service provision and delivery
- Avoiding the use of medical ‘jargon’ in interviews
- The nomadic aspect of Traveller life and how this may impact on any treatment plan

Richard emphasises that, ***“Social Justice and Equality are everyone’s right and everybody’s business ... (Therefore) in working with a marginalised group, one needs to be mindful and respectful of cultural difference. It is important to acknowledge diversity and to work where possible with the supports available ... There is no hard and fast rule; we all have to be flexible and look for options, not obstacles”***.

Contact Details

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Richard Redmond (Exchange House):
01 872 1094

Travellers and Garda Commissioner express concern about conflict and guns

Garda Commissioner Noel Conroy and Assistant Commissioner Fachtna Murphy met Pavee Point representatives on 4 May 2005 to discuss concerns Travellers have raised about conflict within the Traveller community and policing issues. Pavee Point requested that more resources be put into community oriented policing initiatives with the Traveller community. Efforts to improve the relationship between Travellers and Guards should contribute to improved confidence and communication between the two groups. This in turn could enable them to work together more effectively to address the policing dimension of conflict within the Traveller community and other policing issues.

During the meeting, Commissioner Conroy said that he was particularly concerned at the increased use of guns by members of the Traveller community and the apparent ease with which guns are obtained. Pavee Point representatives stated that Travellers have also been expressing concerns about guns.

Commissioner Conroy urged Travellers who are worried about firearms to call the **Garda Confidential Line – Freefone 1800 666 111**. This is essentially an answering machine that allows people to alert Gardaí to a particular concern they might

have or to give information without having to leave a name or contact details. Alternatively, Travellers may contact their local Garda Station or in an emergency call 999 about this or any other Garda matter. Pavee Point offered to convey this message to Travellers and Traveller organisations.

In terms of community oriented policing, it is worth noting that a number of initiatives have already been taken by the Garda organisation. Garda Ethnic Liaison Officers have been appointed in an effort to improve communication between An Garda Síochána and minority ethnic groups. In some areas Ethnic Liaison Officers and Traveller groups have already begun to make contact and try to build better relations. If Travellers or Traveller organisations wish to make contact with the Ethnic Liaison Officer working in their area, they can find out who to contact by calling the Garda Racial and Intercultural Office on 01 6663817 or their local Garda Station.

In multi-ethnic societies it is important that police organisations reflect the diversity of the communities they serve. An Garda Síochána recently announced an initiative to recruit members of minority ethnic groups. Although the first application deadline has passed, there will be other recruitment drives over the next few years. Traveller organisations and training centres have an important role to play in bringing this recruitment initiative to the attention of Travellers in their areas and encouraging Travellers to apply.

Further information is available from the Garda Racial and Intercultural office on 01 666 3817.

Effecting Change

Researching Drug Issues within the Traveller Community in Ireland

Introduction

In June 2003, the National Advisory Committee on Drugs began a research project on drug issues in the Traveller Community. This research proposal was a result of lobbying work and submissions by Pavee Point in 2000 and 2001 to Eoin Ryan, the then Junior Minister of State with responsibility for drugs.

Pavee Point argued that there was a dearth of research on the nature and extent of drug use in the Traveller community and the only research completed to date was our own research project *Drug Issues in the Traveller Community 1999*. This was carried out as part of the EU funded Youthstart Programme. The research was commissioned to gather information on those at risk of drug use in the Traveller community, how drugs were affecting Travellers and the possible responses to be developed. This research was on a small scale and in 2001 with the establishment of a new government strategy: **Building on Experience-National Drugs Strategy 2001–2008**, the government made a commitment under Action 98 of the 100 actions to carry out a national research project on drug issues in the Traveller community. This project is co-ordinated by the National Advisory Committee on Drugs.

The role of the Research Advisory Group

Work on the development of a research proposal began in 2001 and was further developed in 2002 with the setting up of a Research Advisory Group. The RAG was established and its role was to advise and support the research project through the make up of its members. Their expertise and knowledge of Traveller issues would be paramount to ensuring the relevant issues in relation to drugs would be addressed. It was also imperative to have Traveller groups involved if the research was to be carried out as it otherwise would not have been possible. Traveller involvement in the research was supported by the representation of Traveller groups on the RAG.

The RAG was made up of the three national Traveller organisations, (Pavee Point Travellers' Centre, the Irish Traveller Movement and the National Traveller Women's Forum), a member of the Traveller Health Advisory Committee, Clondalkin Travellers Development Group, Exchange House, Parish of the Travelling People and the Research Officer of the National Advisory Committee on Drugs.

The National Drugs Strategy –

Patricia O'Connor is the Director of the National Drug Strategy Team, here she writes about the role of the National Drug Strategy and how Travellers and Traveller organisations can become involved in the structures that implement the National Drug Strategy: Building on Experience 2001–2008

The National Drugs Strategy (NDS) is a national plan to tackle illegal drug use. It outlines key goals that government departments and agencies (such as the National Drugs Strategy Team) should reach by 2008. By setting out actions in this way, it keeps a focus on practical ways to improve the lives of people, families and communities that are affected by drug misuse.

Every area in Ireland is covered by a Task Force – either by a Local Drugs Task Force (LDTF) or a Regional Drugs Task Force (RDTF). Fourteen LDTFs were set up in 1997 or following years in urban areas where heroin was most used. The RDTFs have been set up more recently to respond to countrywide illegal drug use. The Task Forces bring together government departments and agencies with the community and voluntary sector

to develop projects and actions. The type of projects supported range from education and prevention work with young people and parents to providing support services for families of drug users. A number of the projects focus on meeting the specific needs of the Traveller community. Funding to carry out this work comes through the Minister of State at the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs, who is responsible for the National Drug Strategy.

It is through these structures that Travellers can fit into the NDS. Local and Regional Task Forces have community

Terms of Reference for the research tender itself and the research process

The objectives of the Research were to:

- Portray as accurately as possible the nature and extent of illicit drug use among the Traveller community
- Identify patterns of problematic drug use and drug related risk behaviours; and
- Recommend solutions that are needed to prevent and deal with the harmful health consequences of illicit drug use

The project was undertaken using various forms of information and research techniques

- Collection and analysis of existing information
- Consulting Travellers and people who work with the Traveller community through focus groups and key informant interviews
- Data analysis and interpretation
- Developing interventions and strategy planning

Current Situation

The research began in the autumn of 2003 and will be completed before the end of 2005. It has been a long process but it is envisaged that when the findings are presented to the RAG in October that recommendations will then be collated based on the findings. It is hoped the research will be published before the end of 2005.

Next steps

The research when it is completed will be disseminated to Traveller groups, drug service providers, policy makers etc. This is a vital piece of work and it is imperative that all service planners take the research findings and recommendations into account when planning inclusive drug related services, projects and policies that will meet the need of Travellers. The learning from the project will inform key players such as

- Local and Regional Drug Task Forces

- The National Drug Strategy Team
- Traveller organisations
- Drug services
- Other relevant agencies

The research findings and recommendations should in turn become imbedded into and ensure Traveller inclusion within the 100 actions of the National Drug Strategy between now and 2008 to ensure the real needs of the Traveller Community in relation to drugs are responded to in a comprehensive manner.

What the TSDI would like to see happen

We believe that this research and the process of carrying out the research have been extremely important in relation to the issue of drugs. Currently a lot of gaps exist in terms of the State's response to the Traveller community on this issue. It is hoped that this research will provide an evidence base and a more coherent and multi faceted approach.

We would call on Traveller organisations to actively take part in the discussions on how the recommendations of the research should and could be implemented. Traveller participation, including the participation of Travellers who are drug users, contributed hugely to this research, without which it would not have worked, this good will conveys the commitment of Traveller organisations to this issue. The next challenge will be the implementation of its recommendations. The whole Traveller community has a lot to gain through a positive response to this research but it also has a lot to lose if this opportunity is lost. The Traveller Specific Drugs Initiative is committed to a positive outcome and with the support of Traveller groups, policy makers and drug services; we believe that this is achievable.

where do Travellers fit in?

representatives that link back to the wider community through different Networks in the area community forums or Task Force project networks for example. Task Forces also have subgroups (like education prevention, treatment/ rehabilitation and supply reduction) that community individuals can participate on. The Team actively promotes participation by what we refer to as "communities of interest", such as the Traveller community, in these structures and the operational guidelines developed for both local and regional task forces identifies this as an issue to be promoted.

At a broader level, the National Drugs Strategy Team links in with the Pavee Point Traveller Specific Drug Initiative and Fergus McCabe the community representative on the Team links in with Sinead Smith, Coordinator, on a regular basis. The Task Force coordinators also link in directly with the Initiative.

Our aim is to make a real and tangible difference to how the needs of the Traveller community in relation to drugs misuse are met. If your group is interested in getting more information on the work of the Team, Local or Regional Task Forces, or in linking with

your Local or Regional Task Force, please do not hesitate to contact any of the following at the Team office, Floor 2, 4-5 Harcourt Road, Dublin 2 or

Fergus – Community Representative
fmccabe@pobail.ie phone: 01 475 4896

Aoife – Development Officer
adavey@pobail.ie phone: 01 475 4893

Carmel – Administration
cmadden@pobail.ie phone: 01 475 4895

Regional Drug Task Forces Updates

In the last year Regional Drug Task Forces have been set up around the country. This was to ensure a co-ordinated response to drug issues outside Dublin. The TSDI has actively sought Traveller participation on these committees through our work with the National Drug Strategy Team and in writing to both RDTF co-ordinators and Traveller groups keeping them informed of all developments. Some recent events:

- Nearly all RDTFs have submitted their draft strategic plans
- All RDTFs have received 500,000 euros to develop these plans in year 1, which in many regions has been seen as an inadequate amount
- In some regions there is Traveller representation on the RDTF, as is the case of three areas, however at this stage participation of Travellers on these fora is low

- In the Regional Drug Task Force guidelines Travellers are named as a 'community of interest' and as a target group for the RDTF, this was lobbied for by the TSDI. This means that all RDTFs should be encouraging Traveller participation on these structures and be developing actions in relation to drugs for Travellers. This should be done in consultation with local Traveller organisations.

We would see the RDTF structure as a real opportunity for Travellers to address the drugs issue locally in partnership with service providers working on drugs and drug related issues. If you would like supports, information etc on any of the above, you can contact us in Pavee Point

Local Drug Task Forces Prioritise Travellers

As part of our ongoing work, in August the TSDI was asked by the National Drug Strategy Team to contact Traveller groups and to review the work we were doing with Travellers in Local Drug Task Force Areas. The purpose of this was to come up with a list of LDTF areas that had not to date developed links or worked with Travellers on the issue of drugs. As a result of this we spoke to Traveller groups in a number of areas who agreed that Travellers in their area need to be included in the work of the LDTF.

Travellers are now a high priority and a target group in relation to the work of the LDTF in all areas. However the TSDI have cited a number of issues that need to be taken into account by the LDTFs:

- The lack of resources within local Traveller organisations to address the issue of drugs
- Work on the drugs issue is only beginning in many Traveller groups

- No formal linkages between drug service providers, LDTF and Traveller organisations in many cases
- Task Forces are only beginning to take up the issue of Traveller inclusion

Some of the suggestions we have made are

- There is a need to resource Traveller involvement on the LDTF and this must be supported by working with local Traveller organisations
- Travellers to be named as a target group in area action plans with key actions developed through a consultation and dialogue process with Traveller organisations

If you are in a Local Drugs Task Force Area and would like supports, information etc., you can contact us in Pavee Point

ORUGS - Information for Traveller Parents



Drugs Information Leaflet

Following demand for Traveller specific drug information materials the TSDI are in the latter stages of producing a drugs awareness leaflet on the signs and symptoms of drug use for Traveller parents. The leaflet is one of a series of health promotion leaflets and materials which the TSDI aims to develop and circulate within the coming months. The TSDI plan to produce a variety of

health promotion materials that will target different groups within the Traveller community and address a range of drug issues. The leaflet for Traveller parents has been piloted among a number of Traveller groups. Once completed the leaflet will be circulated among Traveller organisations, drugs services, health services and other relevant bodies.

Primary Health Care Drugs Module

From the establishment of the TSDI a regular part of the work has been designing and delivering drug awareness training to Primary Health Care (PHC) groups in Traveller organisations around the country. Due to the increased

demand for such training, the TSDI propose within the coming year to design a PHC drugs training module. This module will include general drugs awareness, Traveller specific information and will be culturally appropriate in nature.