



**PRE-BUDGET
2001 SUBMISSION**

FROM

PAVEE POINT TRAVELLERS CENTRE

NOVEMBER 2001

CONSIDER THIS...

Traveller's experience of direct and indirect discrimination has financial implications.

FACILITIES

Living without electricity means heating, cooking, boiling water with a generator or bottled fuel. These types of fuel are more expensive and require transport to purchase. Fuel that you must have the capacity to pay for there and then.

Living without electricity and/or piped gas means that you do not build up any credit with service providers.

On halting sites residents pay for their electricity using a card system. This system costs the user more money as the local authority includes an administration cost. Also, a card system does not allow the user build up any credit with their service provider, nor can they access schemes to purchase goods via credit on their bills. And again, the user must be able to pay for their electricity on the spot.

No water or power supply means that clothes must be washed in a laundrette, costing the family more money.

The poor conditions of some sites means that clothes get muckier and dirtier, requiring them to be washed more often. Travellers living in poor quality accommodation need good quality footwear.

ACCOMMODATION

Despite popular belief Travellers living on local authority accommodation pay rent. Travellers also have to purchase caravans. A good quality caravan, that would provide a dry, warm home, is expensive and does not have the life span of a house. Caravans need to be replaced regularly.

FOOD

Families living without electricity do not have fridges or freezers. Therefore they cannot bulk buy food and they cannot freeze food. Food has to be bought in small amounts, often from small local shops that are more expensive than larger supermarkets.

Halting sites are often in isolated locations a distance from large shops, leaving families without transport, or Travellers who cannot drive, relying on small local shops, again shops that are more expensive.

BANKING/CREDIT UNIONS

Travellers often have a difficulty opening bank or credit union accounts without permanent addresses. Travellers also do not have the option of proving their address using bills, as they are required to pay for their service using pre-paid cards. Therefore, Travellers access to credit facilities is restricted.

HEALTH

Traveller's poor health status has been well documented. Travellers young and old have poorer health than their settled peers, therefore they require medical and health services more often. Poor health costs money directly and indirectly. The medical card does not cover basic over the counter medications. Poorer health also has indirect costs, paying for taxis to get to and from doctors and hospitals, staying with children in hospitals, purchasing good quality food to improve health and trying to maintain a warm and damp free environment in poor conditions.

EDUCATION

Traveller poor education experience means that the majority of young Travellers have left school before they are 15.

Poor education coupled with discrimination in the labour market means that many of these young Travellers are left without an income and the families lose their children's allowance when the young Traveller reaches 16 if they are not in education.

EMPLOYMENT

Travellers experience discrimination when trying to access the mainstream labour market. This means that Travellers ability to earn an income is restricted.

“they don't see a man who has skills to offer coming looking for a job, they see a Traveller plus dozens of other Travellers following him (sure don't we only come in droves?) and loads of Hiace vans pulling up and of course the caravans coming to stay. All you want is a job but what chance have you?” *Job Vacancies...Vacant Jobs*, Phyllis Murphy, 2001, Pavee Point Publications.

INTRODUCTION

Pavee Point welcomes the opportunity to submit our views and concerns in relation to Budget 2001.

In order to build a comprehensive strategy to tackle poverty and marginalisation for communities such as Travellers, this budget must fall within the framework of the National Anti-Poverty Strategy and address commitments made in the Programme for Prosperity and Fairness. In particular, the PPF commitment to update the NAPS analysis to include causes of poverty such as racism.

Commitments made through NAPS, PPF and the National Development Plan, as well as specific commitments such as the Traveller Health Strategy and the National Traveller Accommodation Act, 1998, need to be properly resourced and developed within the context of a budget that will aim to address poverty and social exclusion.

POVERTY AND EQUALITY PROOFING

National, regional and local policies and initiatives need to be poverty and equality proofed. Currently the mechanisms to instigate comprehensive poverty proofing structures have not been developed; accurate and comprehensive data is still not being collected, nor are the administrative structures sufficiently resourced. Apart from the information and administration deficit, the political and structural commitment to properly poverty and equality proof is not in place.

Useful poverty and equality proofing must indicate the impact of proposals on groups in poverty or at risk of poverty and those who experience discrimination and inequality.

Centrally, and particular to this submission, the Budget should be both poverty proofed and equality proofed with regard to social welfare and taxation amendments to ascertain their impact on minority ethnic groups like Travellers.

COLLECTION, COLLATION, DISSEMINATION OF ETHNIC DATA WITHIN AN EQUALITY FRAMEWORK

Information needs to be gathered through all stages of involvement with services and structures, including access, participation and outcomes. This information then needs to be collated, analysed and made available for interested parties to develop analysis and responses. As part of a full and comprehensive understanding of issues, a system of ethnic equality monitoring needs to

be developed and implemented so that information re the ethnic background of all clients can be collected, in an appropriate, sensitive and effective manner. We propose that the appropriate way to collect this information is to ensure that it is clearly done within an equality and human rights framework i.e. it should be clear that the data is being collected from all clients (not just minorities); for the sole purpose of promoting equality of outcome for all from the service, by assisting service providers review equality policies, monitor progress and target resources; and within the terms of the Data Protection Act. The Programme for Prosperity and Fairness endorses this strategy.

Travellers need to be identified in the context of ethnicity on all recording systems, e.g. health and education. This data then needs to be analysed and disseminated, and used to inform policy and monitor and evaluate strategies. The data then needs to be made available to front line staff and Traveller organisations on an ongoing basis.

EDUCATION

- **Intercultural Education**

The PPF is committed to promoting interculturalism and anti-racism through the Social Personal and Health Education Programme in primary school and the Civic, Social and Political Education Programme in post-primary school. Confining these issues to one subject area is to misunderstand them or to minimise them. Interculturalism embraces every aspect of the educational establishment. It is our view that a time-defined working group of the educational stakeholders with representatives of Traveller and other minority ethnic groups be established to oversee and promote the implementation of interculturalism (including curriculum and publications) in the education system. This could be facilitated through the National Consultative Committee on Racism and Interculturalism.

We also recommend that the necessary in-service and pre-service training be provided to teachers, principals, etc. in intercultural, anti-racist approaches to education.

HEALTH

- **Traveller Health Strategy**

The Traveller Health Strategy, which has been in preparation for the last seven years, must be published immediately. Adequate resources must be allocated, coupled with a political and administrative commitment, to fully implement this urgent strategy to address the continuing health inequalities that exist for Travellers.

- **Medical Cards**

The importance of the medical card cannot be overestimated for many Travellers, the poor health status, combined with larger families than the national average, result in a dependence on access to free health care.

As a result, the potential loss of the medical card, which would result from employment, is a huge disincentive to many Travellers. The fear of losing the benefits provided by a medical card prevents Travellers from accessing employment, which results in the loss of access to a means of empowerment and access to progression out of a poverty trap. This is an issue, which particularly affects Traveller women, as they are primarily responsible for the health and well being of their families.

Pavee Point are looking for affirmative action on the issue of Travellers and medical cards, to tackle the massive inequality in health status without endangering Traveller access to employment and training. Pavee Point propose that the Traveller community retain their medical cards for five years after taking up employment, with a review at the end of the five year period.

This action would be in keeping with reform of benefits to reduce poverty traps, enhance employability and positively impact on women's access to the labour market as advocated by the European Union in the Council Decision on Guidelines for Member States' employment policies for the year 2001.¹

SOCIAL WELFARE

- **Adult Rate of Social Welfare**

Increase the basic adult rate of social welfare by £14 per week.

Pavee Point argue, that at a minimum the budget adopt the majority recommendation of the Working Group on Benchmarking and Indexation, and to make substantial progress towards meeting the target of 27% of Gross Average Industrial Wage in the current year. The target of 30% of GAIE achievable during the period up to 2007 should be the guiding principle on social welfare rates.

- **Child Benefit**

¹ Proposal for a Council Decision on Guidelines for Member States' employment policies for the year 2001

Substantially increase current levels of child benefit through a front loading this year, of the commitments named for delivery by Budget 2003.

Pavee Point endorse the views of the Community and Voluntary Pillar in the belief that there is a need for Government to be clear that there are adequacy / poverty and costs of caring functions within Child Benefit. The Pillar believes that there will remain a gap between the estimated costs of rearing children and the level of child income support to be reached by 2003, especially given that the function of equitable care for children is being more fully incorporated into Child Benefit. If Child Benefit is to be of assistance towards to costs of caring, then assessment of that costs needs to be built into the process of determining benchmarks for adequacy on minimum income standards for children.

- Child Dependent Allowances

Increase both lower rates of Child Dependent Allowance to the higher rate of £17 per week.

- Low Paid Workers

Minimum Wage workers must be completely removed from the tax net.

- Qualified Adult

Substantially increase the rate of Qualified Adults payments. In line with the continuing individualisation of the taxation system, a corresponding increased individualisation of the social welfare system, with the aim 100% for the Qualified Adult Rate.

At a minimum in this budget the Rate should be increased to 80%.

It is important that the limit that an adult dependent can earn before affecting the spouses social welfare is raised to that of a standard training allowance. Such a raise would ensure greater accessibility to training courses. To this end, the development of education and training programmes whose eligibility criteria are not based on the live register are important.

The income limits that apply to what adult dependents can earn before effecting the family welfare payment are set at a daily rather than a weekly rate. The weekly rate, which is £70, is divided into a daily rate, therefore the women cannot earn more than £10 a day rather than £70 per week. This has a significant impact on Traveller women's involvement in training and employment opportunities and needs to be addressed.

- Family Income Supplement

Raise the Income Limits for Family Income Supplement by 21%.

- Flexible Social Welfare Model

In the Task Force on Travelling People Report, 1995, a recommendation was made on the development of part work and part income support models. This was made in the context of the Social Economy, discussion at the European level raised through the White Paper on Growth, Competitiveness, Employment, and recycling. Subsequent wider developments through the Back to Work Allowance and the Social Economy Programme have highlighted the potential of implementing such a recommendation.

However, progress has been inadequate and in particular in supporting the work Travellers initiative themselves through the Traveller economy. The main reason for this is the lack of acknowledgement of cultural diversity within Irish society and a continuing assumption of one model of work organisation.

Pavee Point is calling for the urgent development of accessible, flexible and on-going income supports. Such a development would serve to acknowledge the work Travellers organise themselves; would be a support to those whose activities will not be commercially viable; and present an access route for those whose business could be further developed and potentially mainstreamed.

CHILDCARE

New developments in childcare need to be mainstreamed with the provision of childcare equalised across training and employment programmes, and not linked to specific schemes. This includes an equalisation of both criteria and funding for childcare.

CONCLUSION

The central challenge for this budget build a comprehensive strategy to tackle poverty and marginalisation for communities such as Travellers. In order to seriously tackle these issues racism and discrimination as causes of poverty need to be addressed. A commitment needs to be made to comprehensively equality and poverty proof policy and practice based on good quality information, and to target this year's budget at those who have not benefited from recent economic growth and increased wealth.

PAVEE POINT

Pavee Point is a national non-governmental organisation which is committed to the attainment of human rights for Irish Travellers. It was established in 1983 and is based in Dublin. The organisation is a partnership of Travellers and settled people working together to address the needs of Travellers as a minority ethnic group who experience exclusion, marginalisation and racism.

Pavee Point has extensive experience in developing innovative and culturally appropriate responses to the needs of Travellers from its starting point based on a community development approach and on an intercultural model. The organisation seeks to combine local action with national resourcing, and direct work with research and policy formulation.