



**PAVEE POINT**  
TRAVELLER AND ROMA CENTRE

## Traveller Mens' Health

### 'Our Geels' - All Ireland Traveller Health Study

The All Ireland Traveller Health Study (AITHS) results were published in 2010 and showed that the health status of Traveller men's health was very poor and they are expected to live 15 years less than settled men. This gap has widened since a 1987 survey which indicated that Traveller men lived 10 years less than settled men.

- The 2010 figure is equivalent to the life expectancy of the general population in the 1940's.
- Cancer and Heart disease are the main causes of death within Traveller men.
- Traveller men have four times the mortality rate of the general population.
- The Study also showed that the death due to suicide among Traveller men is 7 times higher than among the settled men.

### Shame/Stigma

Traveller men have difficulties attending a doctor and/or hospital as they are ashamed, seeing attending a



doctor as a sign of weakness. Many Traveller men also have poor literacy skills impacting their attendance at check-ups or appointments. Discrimination has a detrimental effect on Travellers and is an ongoing issue.

- 40% of Travellers have experienced discrimination in accessing health services.
- 48% of Travellers don't feel "most people can be trusted."
- The level of complete trust by Travellers in health professionals was only 41%. This compares with a trust level of 83% by the general population in health professionals.
- Over 40% of Travellers had a concern that they were

not always treated with respect and dignity.

Service providers also agreed that there was discrimination in their services

➤ *"It does exist...there is that sentiment that Travellers are less deserving, hence give them substandard services."* (SSI Service Provider).

➤ *"Racism is one of factors, but won't be said officially as they (institution) will be in trouble."* (SSI Service Provider).

Pavee Point work with Traveller men to help them realise the normalcy and benefits of proper health care and doctor attendance.

### Partnership work

Pavee Point encourages Traveller men to become involved in initiatives used to provide opportunities for health education. Currently we are building a grotto at a site in the Finglas area. While building, we are using the opportunity to talk about mental health and suicide in an informal setting. Generally, speaking about

suicide is a taboo subject within the Community and Traveller men would not speak about their mental health issues. There is also a youth mental health worker working with young Travellers and encouraging them to talk if they have a problem.

We work in partnership with other voluntary and community agencies such as Marie Keating Foundation, Irish Heart Foundation and Asthma Society of Ireland. These agencies provide a service directly on Traveller sites. Agency staff avail of the opportunity to talk to Traveller men and become aware of their issues. Health days on site work because a large number of men attend in a familiar setting. Following on from these on site clinics men have made appointments to see their local doctor for a full check-up.

### **Sports**

Travellers feel less discriminated against in sport. Many Travellers are involved in soccer and GAA. Boxing is prominent in the community, with role models from the Traveller community to look up to like John Joe Nevin, Olympic Silver Medallist and Joe Ward Gold Medallist at the European Championships. Sport is involved when working with young Travellers. Recently, the youth team have been produced a boxing DVD for Reel Youth, focusing on mental health and suicide.

### **Future Work**

In 2014, Pavee Point will be involved with a Traveller men's shed initiative. The project would allow us to work with Travellers on projects such as tinsmithing, building Traveller wagons and community gardens. Space would also be given to discuss health issues and provide support and encouragement to Traveller men to engage.

