



PAVEE POINT  
TRAVELLER AND ROMA CENTRE

## Mental Health and Suicide in the Traveller Community

When the All Ireland Traveller Study (AITHS) was launched in 2010 it showed that that health issues in the Traveller community were far more troubling than for settled people. There is a high rate of mental health illness and Suicide with in the community with suicide the cause of 11% of all Traveller deaths. The suicide rate for Traveller women is 6 times higher than settled women and is 7 times higher for Traveller men. Suicide is most common in young Traveller men aged 15-25.

- 62.7% of Traveller women said their mental health was not good enough for one or more days in the last 30 days compared to 19.9% of GMS female card holders.
- 59.4% of Traveller men said that their mental health was not good for one or more days in the last 30 days compared to 21.8% of GMS male card holders.
- 56% of Travellers said that poor physical and mental health restricted their normal daily activities compared to 24% of the GMS population.

Travellers face a lot of discrimination when they attend mental health service providers and also face additional barriers, such as embarrassment around literacy difficulties and a lack of culturally appropriate engagement.



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

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

*..."and again if you extend that to people who are already socially excluded, before they get into a mental health problem there is a sort of a double exclusion. So you are excluded because you are a Traveller or an ethnic minority and then you are excluded further because you have a mental health problem." (Service Provider)*

Pavee Point works in partnership with a variety of organisations to identify culturally appropriate methods which can be used to raise awareness of the mental health and suicide situation for Travellers, and to address it adequately. In the past we have worked in partnership with Cross Care and the National Traveller Suicide Awareness Project in developing a suicide prevention leaflet and poster for Travellers.

Traveller Community Health Workers employed through the Primary Health Care for Travellers Project worked in partnership with Temple St Hospital to develop an information leaflet for Travellers on the Self Harm Team based in the hospital.

A Bullying resource for Traveller parents was developed through the Eastern Regional Traveller Health Network and the Traveller Health Unit.

## **Traveller Men**

Mental health and suicide is a main focus of our work with Traveller men. During the All-Ireland Traveller Health Study 2010 Traveller men spoke about how suicide is destroying their community and how they never talk about these taboo issues. Pavee Point and other Traveller organisations seek to end this pattern and to encourage conversation on these issues.

## **AITHS Men's Focus groups**

*"We have serious mental problems and we are not dealing with it, and for starters I have often got, Jesus, serious depression in my house, I must say and I have had to go for a walk, women do the same thing. I am not depressed all the time, but I go for a walk." (AITHS Mens' Focus Group)*

*"When it comes to suicide Travellers don't talk and they should" (Young Traveller, 14).*

