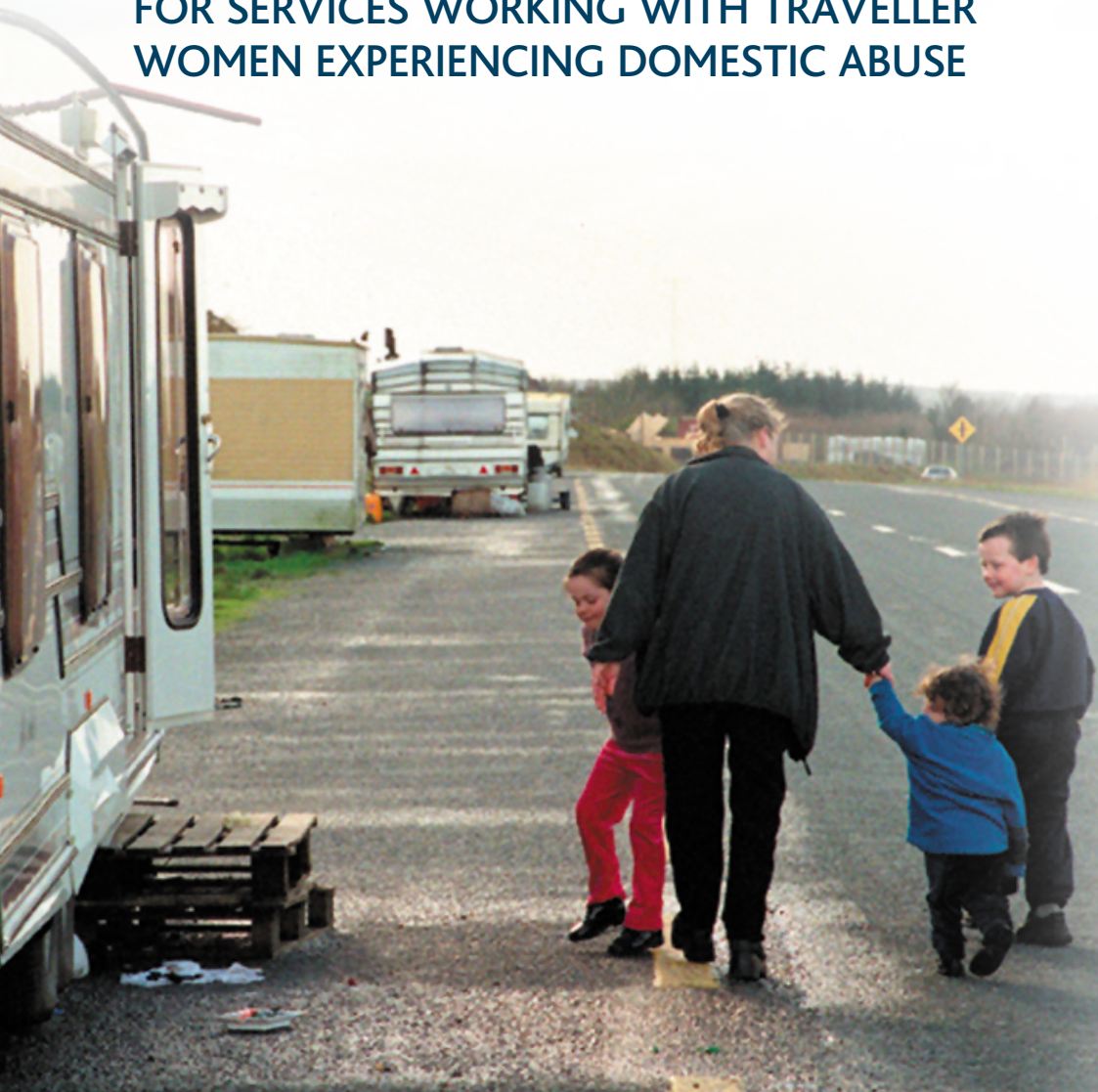


Good Practice Guidelines

FOR SERVICES WORKING WITH TRAVELLER
WOMEN EXPERIENCING DOMESTIC ABUSE



Domestic abuse within the home knows no boundaries. It is experienced by both men and women of all socio-economic classes, background and ethnic origin. This booklet aims to highlight the particular plight of Traveller women and the obstacles that they face when deciding to leave a violent situation and to seek external supports in the form of refuge. Principles of good practice are also included to provide guidance to services when assisting Traveller women experiencing the many forms of domestic abuse.

This booklet was made possible by funding received from Cosc* – The National Office for the Prevention of Domestic, Sexual and Gender-based Violence.

.....

CONTENTS:		<i>page</i>
Section One:	Who are Travellers?	2
Section Two:	Issues for Traveller Women Experiencing Violence	5
Section Three:	Principles for Good Practice	7
Section Four:	Checklist for Services	11
Section Five:	Bibliography	11
Section Six:	Useful Contacts	12

.....



'In 2003, Traveller women, either alone or with children, accounted for 49 per cent of admissions to refuges.'

Domestic Abuse of Women and Men in Ireland: report of the
National Study of Domestic Abuse. Dublin, (2005)

'Several international studies have found that minority ethnic women and women living in poverty are at higher risk for violence of all types, particularly for severe and life-threatening violence (Greenfield et al, 1998).'

The National Strategy on Domestic, Sexual and Gender-based Violence (2010-2014)

'Although domestic violence occurs in families of all ethnicities, socioeconomic backgrounds, levels of education, age and in same-sex relationships, international evidence indicates that it is most commonly experienced within relationships or communities where there is support for strongly hierarchical or male dominated relationships and where male authority over women and children is culturally expected and condoned'

(United Nations, 2006)

1. WHO ARE TRAVELLERS?

Population:

Travellers are a minority ethnic group, indigenous to the island of Ireland. Travellers maintain a shared history, language, traditions, including a nomadic lifestyle and culture. The 2010 All Ireland Traveller Health Study¹, commissioned by the Department of Health and Children and carried out by researchers at University College Dublin in partnership with Pavee Point and Traveller organisations throughout Ireland, found that there were 36,224 Travellers living in the Republic of Ireland when they carried out a census of Travellers in 2008. This is significantly higher than previous figures from the national census of the population² and reflects the effectiveness of the peer research methodology used for data collection.

Accommodation:

Nomadism was an integral part of Traveller culture, but many Travellers are no longer nomadic, either by choice or due to lack of support for and criminalisation of nomadism. Some Travellers live in standard housing, others in halting sites and some still live on the side of the road due to a lack of other suitable accommodation. This lack of accommodation also affects Traveller women's ability to leave an abusive relationship. 'Anecdotal information from specialist women's refuge and legal advice staff (and community members who have spoken on this subject) provide strong indicators that insecurely accommodated or nomadic women experiencing violence will put the requirements of their family first and prioritise the immediate basic needs of their children, placing the requirement to maintain a home over their own health and well-being'³.

Traveller women:

Traveller women play an important role in their immediate family and the wider Traveller community. They usually have responsibility for the home, family and children and often broker with service providers and take on leadership roles in acting as spokespeople for the community. They are frequently the custodians of Traveller culture.

Traditional gender roles in the Traveller community, unequal power relations between men and women, mean that Traveller women face the dual discrimination of patriarchal norms within their own community that restrict options open to them as well as facing racism and discrimination from the majority population. Many Traveller women are more easily identifiable than Traveller men, and are therefore more likely to experience discrimination.

1. *Our Geels All Ireland Traveller Health Study*. University College Dublin, Department of Health and Children. Kelleher et al (2010)

2. Traveller population – 22,435, National Census, 2006. Available at: www.cso.ie.

3. University of Bristol (2009) *Inequalities experienced by Gypsy and Traveller communities: A Review*,

Pavee Point research⁴ into attitudes to sex education and sexual relationships has found that Traveller parents are generally strict, as defined by themselves and are particularly protective of their daughters who are not expected to “date” boys or to engage in sex outside of marriage. Young women are expected to marry, often at about the age of 18, and to have children. Marriage is expected to be for life although there is an increase in divorce and single parenting within the community. These expectations are seen as matters of pride for the family and to do otherwise would bring shame on the family. It would also be seen as the norm for young Traveller women, upon getting married, to move to their new husband’s site to be with his family therefore reducing access to and levels of support from their own immediate family members. The amalgamation of the above factors can result in lengthy delays in seeking help when living in an abusive relationship.

Discrimination:

Travellers experience widespread discrimination and racism in Irish society. A survey⁵ carried out in 2007/2008 found that 39.6% of people surveyed would welcome a Traveller “as a member of the family”. The main reasons why 60.1% of respondents would not welcome a Traveller into the family were because of their “way of life” (63.7%) and because it was “not socially acceptable” (17.8%). In addition, 18.2% of respondents said they would deny Irish citizenship to Travellers. 79.6% of those surveyed responded that they “would be reluctant to buy a house next door to a Traveller.”



4. Pavee Point (2010) *Travellers' Attitudes to Sexual Relationships and Sex Education* (publication pending).

5. MacGréil, M. (2010) *Emancipation of the Travelling People*. National University of Ireland, Maynooth.

Education:

Many Travellers experience poor educational outcomes. This has led to a high proportion of Travellers having difficulties with reading and writing. Early school leaving has been a particular issue for Traveller children, although there have been some improvements in recent years. According to the 2006 Census, 53% of Travellers over the age of 15 years had only primary level education or no formal education. A 2006 survey by the Department of Education and Science⁶ found that almost all Traveller children enrol in primary school but just over 10% of Travellers who enrol in post-primary schools complete their post-primary education (this contrasts with over 85% of students generally). The All Ireland Traveller Health Study found that over 60% of Travellers felt they had been discriminated against in school.

Employment:

Travellers were traditionally craftspeople, horse traders, message carriers, tinsmiths, engaged in buying and selling goods and provided a seasonal labour force with a variety of skills; economic activities suited to a nomadic way of life. These skills are no longer as relevant to a modern society and Travellers experience high levels of unemployment. According to the 2006 Census of the population only 14% of Travellers aged 15 years and over were described as "at work", compared with 53% of the general population aged 15 years and over. Many Traveller women do not have financial independence and this can contribute to them being unable to leave a violent situation. A very practical and immediate outcome of not having their own money is that they may not have transport or a taxi fare in order to get away.

Health:

The All Ireland Traveller Health Study found that the life expectancies of the Traveller community today are comparable to life expectancies of the general population in the late 1940's for males and early 1960's for females. As a result, 63%⁷ of the Traveller community in Ireland is aged under 25 years. Some of the stark findings in relation to mortality rates and life expectancy are as follows:

- Traveller males die (on average) 15 years before their counterparts in the general population, and females 11 years earlier.
- Infant mortality in Travellers is 3.6 times higher than in the general population.

6. Department of Education and Science (2006) Survey on Traveller Education Provision. Available at: http://www.education.ie/servlet/blobservlet/des_insp_travellers_foreword_te.htm

7. MacGréil, M. (2010) *Emancipation of the Travelling People*. National University of Ireland, Maynooth.



2. ISSUES FOR TRAVELLER WOMEN EXPERIENCING VIOLENCE

Research has shown that Traveller women use refuges more proportionally than the majority population⁸, are more likely to be accompanied by children than the rest of the population, and are also more likely to use refuges on more than one occasion. Traveller women tend to use refuges as a temporary respite from a violent relationship, staying for approximately one week before returning home⁹. Some Traveller women report very positive experiences of using refuges. Research¹⁰ has also found that although Traveller women know about refuges, they have less knowledge of other services, such as helplines and support services.

Traveller women experience a number of barriers and issues in relation to accessing services:

- Lack of access to mobile phones, transport and money to pay for a taxi can all prevent a Traveller woman calling for help or leaving a violent situation.
- Information on available services may be inaccessible to Traveller women due to literacy problems.
- The exclusion of teenage boys from some refuges is a difficulty for Traveller women who are not prepared to leave their sons behind in a violent situation while they stay in a refuge (although this is likely to be an issue for many women, not just Travellers).
- Travellers can have a high level of mistrust of people in positions of authority, including the legal system, Gardaí, social workers and sometimes GPs.

8. Watson, D. and S. Parsons (2005). *Domestic Abuse of Women and Men in Ireland: report of the National Study of Domestic Abuse*. Dublin: National Crime Council.

9. Women's Health Council (2009) *Translating Pain into Action: A Study of Gender Based Violence and Minority Ethnic Women in Ireland*.

10. Watson, D. and S. Parsons (2005). *Domestic Abuse of Women and Men in Ireland: report of the National Study of Domestic Abuse*. Dublin: National Crime Council.

- Trust emerged as a major issue in the focus groups organised as part of Our Geels All Ireland Traveller Health Study. Lack of trust has a direct impact on the level of engagement of Travellers with health services. Over 40% of Travellers had a concern that they were not always treated with respect and dignity. Over 50% of Travellers had concerns about the quality of care they had received when they engaged with health services.¹¹ This can result in a reluctance to disclose violence to people in positions of authority. Travellers can also be reluctant to disclose because of the stigma surrounding issues of domestic violence and the fear of reinforcing negative stereotypes about violence within the Traveller community. This means that service providers need to take an assertive approach in order to encourage the woman to disclose violence i.e. by asking questions rather than waiting for self-disclosure.
- An example of the fear and mistrust Traveller women feel is the concern that their children would be taken into care by social workers. This has been cited¹² as one of the reasons for short stays in refuges (as children were not attending school). There is also a common fear that service providers in a refuge could take children from their mothers; or that GPs could report violence to Gardaí and/or social workers.
- Some Traveller women have experienced racism and discrimination when seeking support, for example, facing the belief that violence is "just part of their culture" or simply through a lack of understanding of Traveller culture. Traveller women can be reluctant to disclose to a "settled person" as a result.
- In the past, contacting the Gardaí could be perceived negatively within the Traveller community although in recent years, efforts have been made to improve relations between Gardaí and Travellers in certain regions around the country which has resulted in better communication.
- Traveller communities and families are often strong and supportive; however this may not always be the case in relation to violence against women. This can be due to the shame and stigma surrounding domestic violence, and the concern that taking action could endanger the safety of their wider family. This means that Traveller women may receive either limited or no support to leave a violent situation from within their community and yet are likely to be isolated from wider society and so lack other sources of support.
- Sometimes younger Traveller women experiencing violence are not supported by older Traveller women who may have experienced violence themselves with a preference for the issue to be dealt with within the home.

11. *ibid*

12. Women's Health Council (2009) *Translating Pain into Action: A Study of Gender Based Violence and Minority Ethnic Women in Ireland*.

3. PRINCIPLES FOR GOOD PRACTICE

There are a number of steps that service providers can take to ensure their service is appropriate for, and inclusive of, Traveller women. These are as follows:

- 3.1 Providing a Traveller friendly environment**
- 3.2 Providing opportunities for engagement with and representation of Travellers**
- 3.3 Developing and reviewing existing organisational policies and procedures**
- 3.4 Developing and implementing an inclusion policy**
- 3.5 Taking an equal opportunities employment approach**
- 3.6 Delivering cultural awareness and anti-racism training for all staff**
- 3.7 Dissemination of information using Traveller networks and resources**
- 3.8 Data collection**

3.1 Providing a Traveller friendly environment

Creating a more Traveller friendly environment can be achieved by the implementation of the following actions:

3.1.1 Ensuring that the first point of contact with the service is positive by:

- Being supportive, non-judgmental and non-directive¹³
- Being aware of the particular experiences of Traveller women – as outlined in Section One and Two
- Being aware of potential literacy difficulties
- Ensuring confidentiality
- Respecting the rights of the woman

These steps are standard practice in many refuges but ensuring their continuity is important regardless of the number of times a particular Traveller woman presents for assistance.

3.1.2 Clearly outlining the confidentiality and childcare policies of the refuge.

- Outlining these policies to Traveller women and the reasons for their implementation may eliminate any initial fears they may have about seeking the support. It can also provide clarity on accepted practices within the refuge i.e. no smacking

3.1.3 Clearly explaining the services and supports available to the presenting Traveller woman.

- This explanation can also work towards overcoming any unfounded fears of service engagement i.e. that their children will be taken or that social workers or Gardai will be informed

13. Code of Practice on Domestic Violence, Community Response to Domestic Violence Network, 20023

3.1.4 Inclusion of Traveller specific materials and resources throughout the organisation

- Traveller specific posters, resources and material for refuges, including childcare facilities can be ordered from www.paveepoint.ie

3.1.5 Engage in consultation with Traveller women regarding the meeting of their needs where possible.

- Seek evidence of any additional supports that might be required during their stay by asking questions. It should not be assumed that because Traveller women have not asked for assistance, that they do not need it.

3.2 Providing opportunities for engagement with and representation of Travellers

It has been found that policies, programmes and services developed in partnership with Travellers work best. Representation of target groups within decision making forums has been shown to improve service delivery. As Travellers make up 60% of the service users of refuges in Ireland it makes good planning sense to involve Travellers. This can be done by:

3.2.1 Involving Traveller service users in the planning, delivery, implementation and evaluation of service provision

3.2.2 Seeking involvement of a representative from local Traveller organisations

- The presence of a Traveller organisation representative within decision making forums, with local knowledge of the Traveller community, could prove beneficial to the organisation and the women attending.

There are Traveller representative organisations at national and local levels around the country which have vast expertise and work closely with Travellers. (See contact details for the national Traveller representative organisations who have contact details for local Traveller organisations).

3.3 Developing and reviewing existing policies and procedures

Policies clearly set out an organisation's intentions in a particular area. Existing policies in all key areas of the organisation may require attention, as seemingly neutral policies have sometimes been discovered to have an unintentional negative impact on some or all minority ethnic groups. The following are some examples:

- Traveller women trying to leave a violent situation may be disproportionately disadvantaged by the habitual residence condition, which means that they may not get social welfare payments if they have spent time in Northern Ireland or elsewhere in the UK. Individual Traveller women may need support in overcoming this issue.
 - Some refuges have policies, either written or unwritten, about limiting the repeat use of refuges and strongly encouraging women to leave the situation and pursue legal remedies. As described here, in the Traveller culture, some women tend to use refuges
-

for respite and may never leave their husbands permanently. This difference needs to be respected so that Traveller women know they are welcome, even if they have used a service multiple times before.

- Physical punishment i.e. the smacking of children may not be allowed in refuges and Traveller women may need help with learning about alternative methods of disciplining children.

Using equality proofing (sometimes called needs and impact assessment) can help to identify any negative impacts and to ensure the needs of minority groups are taken into account. Pavee Point have developed a Traveller needs and impact assessment toolkit and can provide support with this. Pavee Point also have an anti-racism code of practice that is available to service providers.

3.4 Developing and implementing a social inclusion policy

It is recommended that organisations have a social inclusion policy which takes account of the needs of Travellers. A social inclusion policy is the opposite to an exclusion policy and commits an organisation to providing the best possible service which has a focus on ensuring active inclusion of its service users¹⁴. A social inclusion policy addresses the following issues:

- Effective communication of rules
- Assessment of needs
- Dealing with difficult behaviours
- Complaints procedures
- Appropriateness of service to person's needs.

3.5 Taking an equal opportunities employment approach

The employment of Travellers as support workers in services, in An Garda Síochána and State agencies has been recommended in several research reports. This would ensure these services are more reflective of Travellers in Irish society and may help to address a number of issues such as the mistrust of mainstream services, the reluctance some Traveller women have to disclose to a "settled person" and the lack of a culturally appropriate service sometimes experienced when they do seek help. The availability of a Traveller worker in refuges gives Traveller women options of people who they wish to disclose information to.

Organisations should take the following steps to encourage Travellers to apply for positions in their services.

- Have an equal opportunities of employment policy
- Advertise vacant positions within Traveller organisations
- Use existing local and national Traveller networks to disseminate information about the role
- Consider having a Traveller organisation representative sit on interview panels. Local Traveller organisations could assist with this.

14. QuADS Social Inclusion policy, Progression Routes Initiative, 2010

3.6 Delivering cultural awareness and anti-racism training to all staff

Staff training is an essential component of effectively delivering services to minority groups. All staff require training, not just 'front line' staff; it is equally as important that house-keeping and childcare staff including policy-makers and managers receive training so that they are aware of the possible implications of their comments and decisions. The training should cover cultural awareness and anti-racism and should be delivered by experienced trainers. Pavee Point have a Violence Against Women Unit which can offer such training.

Cultural awareness and anti-racism training should also be included in the mainstream training for the organisation, for example induction training, customer services training and so forth. The impact of recent training provided by Pavee Point is captured succinctly by the following comment made by an attendee, 'I found the training very good and helpful. It will make me more aware when answering the helpline'.

3.7 Dissemination of information using Traveller networks and resources

Travellers have a role to play in providing information about services. As mentioned above, whilst there is widespread awareness of refuges among Traveller women, there is little awareness or use of helplines or other support services. Working with Traveller organisations, culturally appropriate materials could be developed that have been found to work in other areas; posters and DVDs, and wallet cards with useful telephone numbers. Existing networks for Travellers should also be used so that materials can be disseminated and information can be passed by word of mouth.

Traveller organisations are also important to engage with to improve trust between Travellers and mainstream services. Within the Traveller community, they have a role to play in awareness-raising to tackle violence against women. It is important that organisations are adequately funded to do this work.

3.8 Data collection

Action 19 of the National Strategy on Domestic, Sexual and Gender-based Violence¹⁵ is aimed at improving data on domestic and sexual violence. This will involve Cosc working with the relevant organisations to develop and improve data, adhering to best practice around data management. Pavee Point recommend that data collected about service users include their ethnicity and cultural background as this will not only provide the service with a profile of service users but will also be of benefit to national recording of domestic abuse. A question on ethnic or cultural background was used in the Census 2006 and can be adapted for services:

14 What is your ethnic or cultural background?
Choose ONE section from A to D, then ✓ the appropriate box.

A White	<input type="checkbox"/>	Irish
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Irish Traveller
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Any other White background
B Black or Black Irish	<input type="checkbox"/>	African
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Any other Black background
C Asian or Asian Irish	<input type="checkbox"/>	Chinese
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Any other Asian background
D Other, including mixed background	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other, write in description

15. Cosc & Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform (2010)
National Strategy on Domestic, Sexual and Gender-based Violence: 2010-2014



4. CHECKLIST FOR SERVICES:

The following is a summary of key considerations from Section Three. Your organisation may already be doing some of these things.

- ✓ Are you providing a Traveller friendly service?
- ✓ Do you provide opportunities for Traveller engagement and representation?
- ✓ Have existing policies and services been checked to ensure they do not inadvertently discriminate against Travellers?
- ✓ Is there a social inclusion policy which makes a commitment to meet Travellers' needs as far as possible?
- ✓ Have Travellers been encouraged to seek employment in the service?
- ✓ Has cultural awareness and anti-racism training been introduced and mainstreamed into existing training within the organisation?
- ✓ Are Travellers and Traveller organisations consulted and represented in relation to planning, delivery and evaluation of services?
- ✓ Does the service collect data on ethnic and cultural background and is this analysed to show trends and highlight gaps or inequalities?

5. BIBLIOGRAPHY

Cemlyn et al (2009)

Inequalities Experienced by Gypsy and Traveller Communities: A Review, University of Bristol

Central Statistics Office (2007)

National Census 2006. Available at: www.cso.ie

Community Response to Domestic Violence Network (2002)

Code of Practice on Domestic Violence

Cosc & Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform (2010)

National Strategy on Domestic, Sexual and Gender-based Violence 2010-2014

Kelleher et al (2010)

Our Geels All Ireland Traveller Health Study. University College Dublin, Department of Health and Children.

MacGréil, M. (2010)

Emancipation of the Travelling People. National University of Ireland, Maynooth.

Progression Routes Initiative (2010)

QuADS Social Inclusion policy

United Nations. (2006)

Broken Bodies, Broken Dreams: Violence Against Women Exposed.

New York: United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs / IRIN.

Watson, D. and S. Parsons (2005)

Domestic Abuse of Women and Men in Ireland: report of the National Study of Domestic Abuse. Dublin: National Crime Council.

Women's Health Council (2009)

Translating Pain into Action: A Study of Gender Based Violence and Minority Ethnic Women in Ireland.

USEFUL CONTACT DETAILS

COSC – THE NATIONAL OFFICE FOR THE PREVENTION OF DOMESTIC, SEXUAL AND GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

Department of Justice and Law Reform,
2nd Floor, Montague Court, Montague Street, Dublin 2

Tel: +353 1 476 8680. **Fax:** +353 1 476 8619.

Website: www.cosc.ie **Email:** cosc@justice.ie

PAVEE POINT TRAVELLERS CENTRE

46 North Great Charles Street, Dublin 1

Tel: +353 1 878 0255. **Fax:** +353 1 874 2626.

Website: www.paveepoint.ie **Email:** info@pavee.ie

IRISH TRAVELLER MOVEMENT (ITM)

4/5 Eustace Street, Dublin 2

Tel: +353 1 679 6577 **Fax:** +353 1 679 6578

Website: www.itmtrav.ie **Email:** itmtrav@indigo.ie

NATIONAL TRAVELLER WOMEN'S FORUM

Unit 4 First Floor, Tuam Road Centre, Tuam Road, Galway

Tel: +353 (0) 91 771509 **Website:** www.ntwf.net **Email:** ntwf@iol.ie