

'Travelling with Austerity'

Impacts of Cuts on Travellers, Traveller Projects and Services



PAVEE POINT
TRAVELLER AND ROMA CENTRE

2013 Report

'Travelling with Austerity'
Impacts of Cuts on Travellers,
Traveller Projects and Services

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Executive summary and key challenges

This report follows the evolution of community development work with the Traveller community from the 1980s to the present day; examines the effect of austerity on the Traveller community in general and the community development work therein specifically; and looks at how community development work with Travellers may best be developed in the future. Four pen portraits of Traveller advocates are included.

The period from the breaking of the economic and social crisis in 2008 has seen a dramatic disinvestment by the state in the Traveller community. Using the government's own figures, it is possible to identify the scale of the austerity cuts, as follows, but they should be compared to the overall reduction in government current spending of -4.3% over 2008-2013, the baseline.

Programmes for Travellers

Interagency activities	-100%
Traveller education	-86.6%
Traveller accommodation	-85%
Equality	-76.3%
National Traveller organisations	-63.6%
FAS Special Initiative for Travellers	-50%
National Traveller Partnership	-32.1%
Traveller SPY youth projects	-29.8%
Health ¹	-5.4%

Programmes and funding lines of importance to Travellers

Equality and rights agencies	-69%
Local & Community Development Programme	-42.3%
Initiatives against drugs	-32.5%

One of the most striking aspects of these cuts was that statutory agencies did not even spend all their allocations, so the picture is even more difficult. This is a table of the proportions actually spent (and, conversely, the underspend):

	<u>Spend</u>	<u>Underspend</u>
Health	82%	18%
Equality	72%	28%
Accommodation	64%	36%
FAS Special Initiative for Travellers	60%	40%

The only exceptions to the pattern of cuts were the Traveller social economy programme and the National Traveller Money Advice and Budgeting Service, which show that it is possible to protect or even increase specific budget lines.

¹ This figure applies to the period from 2008, but there is evidence of much more substantial cuts in Traveller health budgets prior to then (see main text).

These figures tell an egregious story of an extraordinary level of disinvestment by the Irish state in the Traveller community. One can think of no other section of the community which has suffered such a high level of withdrawal of funding and human resources, compounded by the failure of the state to spend even the limited resources that it has made available.

The reductions in accommodation and education are especially impactful, granted the continued hardship faced by many Travellers on sites and in poor quality private rented accommodation, and granted the still-wide gap in educational opportunities between the Traveller and the settled community. Worrying reports are already coming through on the negative consequences for Travellers at school.

In looking to the future, the report lays out the challenges for community development for the next years with Travellers.

These are:

- ◆ The need to protect, preserve and extend the gains made by community development over the past thirty years, principally its model of development, the infrastructure of Traveller organisations that has built up and the leadership that has developed, training a new, younger generation that will enable the community to cope with the hardships inflicted by austerity, respond to them and emerge from them;
- ◆ The need to challenge and reverse the effects of the decisions taken, which have disproportionately affected the Traveller community, challenging those areas from where the state has retreated, such as anti – racism and inter - culturalism and the prevention of discrimination. The state continues to take decisions without consulting Travelling people, with Travellers unrepresented on high-level groups at national level and local level, contrary to European principles.
- ◆ The importance of making the strategies and the structures developed over the past decades work effectively, especially in such areas as health, accommodation, education, the labour market and enterprise;
- ◆ The need to address key political issues, notably recognition of the Traveller community as a minority ethnic group; amendment of the equal status legislation so as to make it a truly effective instrument against discrimination; interculturalism, especially in schools which are slow to address issues of culture and discrimination despite examples of some good initiatives; and the alignment process, which must preserve the independence of community development projects working with Travellers.

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Terms of reference

Pavee Point is concerned with successive budgetary cuts over the past few years, about the impact of austerity on the work with Travellers and Traveller organisations in Ireland. The Traveller sector has experienced significant losses in the form of redundancies, cuts in services and closure of initiatives and projects. It is particularly concerned about potential future developments where an increasing role for local authorities in Traveller community development work is envisaged in the Local and Community Development Programme (LCDP) and the alignment report *Putting People First*. Pavee Point wishes to examine the value of community development work with Travellers; establish a framework for positioning Traveller work in the future in the different sectors (LCDP, health, education and accommodation etc); and identify more effective mechanisms for documenting outcomes and impacts. It is concerned with the approach of the state which is increasingly equating the work of Traveller organisations with a lack of outcomes, which does not take account for Travellers' demographic status. Little recognition is given to the historical impact of decades of social exclusion and inadequate recognition is given to the achievements of Traveller organizations. The specific research aims are to compile a report to:

1. Map the cumulative impact of the cuts to the Traveller sector;
2. Identify the gap between budget allocation and actual spend on Traveller initiatives and give examples;
3. Provide a rationale for the continuation of funding for community development work with Travellers in the time of austerity;
4. Discuss the potential negative impact of the further withdrawal of support to the Traveller sector including the impact on the state (e.g. potential increase in drug misuse etc), highlighting positive developments;
5. Provide a critique of the proposal to give local authorities a broader remit in Traveller developmental work, given their track record in Traveller accommodation provision, Traveller inter-agency groups and how they have addressed the environmental health concerns of Travellers. This will highlight their potential conflict of interest; the danger of funding being diverted into their core services and their lack of an adequate skill set in community development;
6. Provide a list of key Traveller community development milestones 1985-present and highlight the achievements of a few Traveller leaders through pen pictures documenting their experiences and outcomes in community development. (E.g. Policy; Task Force on Travellers; All Ireland Traveller Health Study; with pen pictures of nominated Traveller personalities).

Method

This research was carried out by:

- ◆ Desk research for background, information and statistics;
- ◆ Key informant interviews with Traveller advocates (see *Pen portraits*);
- ◆ Focus groups with (1) Pavee Point staff; (2) Traveller Community Development Projects (Galway, Wicklow, Bray, Donegal), with additional information provided by Clonakilty CDP. These were held in January 2013.

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1a Community Development with Travellers

By Anastasia Crickley (Chairperson) with Ronnie Fay & Martin Collins (Co-Directors)

Background

Over the past thirty years a variety of independent local and regional Traveller initiatives and national Traveller organisations have used community work approaches and methods in their work for justice, equality and human rights with Travellers. It is this work, and the painstaking collective progress it has been possible to make through it, which is now threatened by austerity measures which have led to the dramatic disinvestment by the State in the Traveller community since 2008 referred to elsewhere in this report. These cuts combined with a vicious and increasingly institutional backlash – as witnessed in recent comments by politicians and judges – can and are having significant and negative impacts for Travellers.

Against that backdrop this report sets out to examine the value of community development work with Travellers and record again the achievements of Traveller organisations. It was with a commitment to the value of collective community development, where people became conscious of their own power and identity rather than continuing to react to pity and subordination, that a group of Travellers and settled people began meeting in the winter of 1983-84. Over two years the philosophy and approach of Dublin Travellers Education and Development Group was debated, discussed and agreed by the Travellers, community workers, and returned missionaries involved. Finally with funding secured from ANCO (later FÁS) and two rooms loaned by Meath Street Catholic Parish, the first education programme began in January 1985².

The early foundations of Pavee Point's community development work and approach outlined below are but part of the patchwork of Pavee Point's work in this area. They illustrate some early points of departure from other methods and philosophies, and show the connections between Pavee Point's direction and its support of and engagement with, a number of other emerging Traveller projects. It is the work of these independent projects, including Pavee Point, the impacts of the cuts on them and the future prospects for community development with Travellers, which is the main focus and concern of this report.

The evolution of community development with Travellers coincides with the evolution of Pavee Point. This moves from the early days of Dublin Travellers Education and Development Group (DTEDG) before the first 1985 education and training programme, through local, national and European programmes and international initiatives to Pavee Point and the organisation's home in the old Free Church off Mountjoy Square. A descriptive overview of Pavee Point's community development

² DTEDG (1987) *Travellers getting involved: Towards community development with Travelling People* DTEDG

work and approach is sketched by way of contextualising some of the early foundations and more recent issues for that work; further critique and analysis subject of which will be contained in an upcoming publication.

Community development is collective, participatory and empowering. It is concerned with the rights of communities to be involved in decisions which affect them, concerned not just with outcomes, but with how these are achieved and building on their consequences. It is focused on the development of a more just and equal society with all those women, men and children who are particularly excluded, discriminated against and marginalised. Its value for stability and progress is globally recognised and its founding principle of participation has become a key tenet of UN Treaty Body implementation. All of this is neatly summed up in two key statements about community development, both of which are used in the current Local and Community Development Programme guidelines.

These state:

“Community development is about promoting positive social change in society in favour of those who benefit least from national and global social and economic developments...it seeks to challenge the causes of poverty and disadvantage and to offer new opportunities for those lacking choice, power and resources.” (Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs 2007)

Community Development “is a developmental activity composed of a task and a process. The task is the achievement of social change linked to equality and social justice, and the process is the application of the principles of participation, empowerment and collective decision-making in a structured and co-ordinated way.” (Area Development management, now Pobal 1999)

Early Days

January 1985 did not mark the first community work intervention with Travellers. Previous innovative and courageous actions involved a local movement in Ballyfermot which included the development of an education project rejected out of hand by the authorities. In the early 1980s Tallaght Travellers Support Group were undertaking equally courageous action with Travellers threatened with eviction from traditional sites along with what was to become the Tallaght bypass. Nan Joyce – who later stood for election – and her sister Chrissy Ward among others emerged as national figures and strong Traveller leaders from these struggles. They could not stop the evictions but the image of Travellers as outcasts in need of assimilation was cracked if not broken. Mervyn Ennis a community worker employed by the Health Board and later the Defence Forces was associated with these initiatives and it was he who also convened the first meeting of the group which became DTEDG and later Pavee Point.

Around the same time Travellers themselves set up Minceir Misli as an organisation to campaign for Traveller rights and identity. The South Central City Community Development Association provided office space in their Meath Street premises. A number of those in leadership roles including Michael and Thomas McCann participated in the first DTEDG education programme. Thomas went on to be the first known Traveller in third level education to openly identify himself as such when he

was a student on the professional education programme for community workers and youth workers at NUI Maynooth (1985 – 1987).

While the 1985 DTEDG education and training programme was not the first community work intervention with Travellers it did however clearly identify discrimination and racism as the issue and community development as the key method to create conditions for addressing it. For the first time these messages were consistently repeated in the programme, in the media, to the State and to any other groups who cared to listen. These challenges to dominant perceptions of Travellers were stoutly resisted by many including some of those who had for years led local itinerant settlement committees and national organisations for the advancement of Travellers. Travellers who completed the first DTEDG education programme and other DTEDG initiatives in the late 1980s subsequently occupied leadership positions in their own community and in national Traveller initiatives. These included Catherine Joyce, ITM and Blanchardstown; Martin Collins, Pavee Point; Chrissie O’Sullivan, Cork Traveller Visibility Group; Michael Collins, Actor; Nancy Power, National Traveller MABS; and Thomas McCann, National Traveller Counselling Service.

The first DTEDG leadership programme and later initiatives set out to support the creation of the conditions for community development and solidarity work through direct involvement of participants in actions and initiatives. Events for and with Traveller women and older Travellers were planned and organised, dramas with Travellers depicting Traveller life were practised and performed, and solidarity actions undertaken with the Dunnes Stores workers anti-apartheid strike and the miner’s strike in the UK. Local issues including evictions were directly addressed and participants engaged actively in meetings of the National Council for Travelling People, an established national umbrella organisation for local Traveller committees.

From the early days those involved in leading the programmes recognised the complexity of the issues involved and the need for intervention at a variety of levels to address them. They also recognised the need for support for Travellers and Traveller groups throughout Ireland in finding new ways to articulate their identity and organise to realise their rights. The programmes director, John O’Connell, brought with him considerable experience of analysis and action from his work with marginalised groups in the Philippines. Direct community worker involvement, both at staff and management levels ensured from the outset that this was grounded in community development initiatives.

The community work approach and its underpinning principles of empowerment and participation was not hard for Travellers to identify with, but it was hotly contested by local committees and professionals using social work methods which individualised both the problems and the solutions. This thinking and its associated pathologies remain evident in some work with Travellers. For some issues, social work and counselling are appropriate interventions; but then and now it’s important not to confuse them with community development or collective empowerment.

Over the first five year period the key features of DTEDG’s approach to community development with Travellers were tried, tested and established.

These included:

- Direct work on the collective involvement of Travellers in action and initiatives on their own behalf at local and national levels
- Development of initiatives and action to elaborate and articulate Traveller identity and culture, and name and address the racism experienced by them and others in Irish society
- Supporting this work through collective education and development processes
- Engagement with the state to inform / and frame policies, procedures and legalisation in ways which supported Traveller rights as an ethnic group and addressed discrimination and racism
- Support and work with Travellers and Traveller groups across the country in order to build solidarity and a critical mass for change
- Engagement with international human rights organisations and other groups to better establish national cases and in order to build international solidarity for change
- Solidarity actions and involvements with other marginalised groups so that similarities and differences in issues to be addressed could be named and alliances built
- Engagement with media, opinion makers, educators and others to address misinformation regarding Travellers and promote new perspectives

From the outset, DTEDG was clear that Travellers are not a homogenous group but rather women and men, predominately young but also with some older people, and while marginalised and mainly unemployed, with their own internal hierarchies and divisions like other communities. Creating the conditions for collective community development interventions involved social analysis education to support participants to get beyond responding to symptoms to identifying and to address the causes of discrimination, exclusion and poverty.

The first leadership programme created space for women and men to reflect separately on the gendered nature of their experiences and issues affecting them. A focus on Traveller women's issues and rights was established as both a direct priority and concern to be addressed in other areas. Building on this DTEDG incorporated women's programmes into its work from 1987 onwards. In 1988 following consultation with groups around the country DTEDG hosted the first national meeting which led to the establishment of the National Traveller Women's Forum, (NTWS) which brought together groups to celebrate and acknowledge Traveller women and address the issues affecting them. The NTWF continued to be supported and serviced by DTEDG and then Pavee Point until funding was secured and a separate Galway office base established.

The initiatives that led to the development of the NTWF are practical examples of DTEDG's concern to work collectively with others to build and then support a critical mass for change and celebration. Another early example of this was the DTEDG's initiative which led to the first Pilgrimage in Solidarity with Travellers, involving the traditional nine day walk from Dublin to Mamean in Connemara³. Travellers from all over the country joined this and later pilgrimages organised by a group with

³ DTEDG File (1992) *Irish Travellers New Analysis and New Initiatives* Pavee Point Publications

representatives from various organisations throughout the 1980s and 1990s, which planned and led preparations for them. The event provided a creative space for celebration of identity and the collective discussion of issues as well as for prayer and religious ceremonies.

Given the demographics of the Traveller population with over 42% under 15 years, it is not surprising that DTEDG's early community development work identified the need for youth work interventions with Travellers. The first DTEDG youth programme commenced in 1987. DTEDG also sought from then on to engage with and influence national youth policy and initiatives towards inclusive and culturally sensitive provision for Traveller girls and boys. Equally the early community work interventions reinforced concerns about severe unemployment and diminishing space for traditional economic activities. DTEDG's Traveller Economy Programme commenced in 1987. Early initiatives included the Traveller Resource Warehouse which provided reusable materials for schools and arts and crafts and the Pavee laundry located on a Traveller site in Coolock.

The key informant and indicator for Traveller policy in the 1980s was the Report of the Travelling People Review Body 1983. This, while an improvement on the 1963 Report of the Commission on Itinerancy was, with its focus on difference as a product of poverty and reluctance to name discrimination as an issue, far from a supportive tool for the rights based community development approach of DTEDG. Equally, if not more of a barrier given their influence with policy makers, law makers and public opinion, were the reactions of local Traveller committees and national organisations to new people with new ways which challenged the existing thinking and leadership.

DTEDG joined the National Council for Travelling People and set out with a small but growing group of other members to influence and inform its direction and policies. The struggles that followed, culminated in the Council disbanding at its Autumn 1990 AGM. DTEDG, along with other groups focused on change and Traveller rights, voted against dissolution. When defeated, they all went to another local venue and began the process which led to the setting up of the Irish Traveller Movement (ITM) .

DTEDG recognised that racism while experienced in very particular ways by Travellers was also oppressive for others in Irish society. Staff as members of the Community Workers Cooperative (CWC) led the development of anti-racism focus in CWC's work. DTEDG also organised events on racism and Travellers, and campaigned successfully to ensure Travellers were named in the 1989 Incitement to Hatred legislation.

Through the first five years DTEDG sustained its community development work, as did other community groups in that decade, through funding from a variety of sources. These were mostly state agencies e.g. ANCO and the Youth Employment Agency whose key concerns were focused on addressing the unemployment of the 1980s recession. 1990 saw a major breakthrough in direct support for community development initiatives with DTEDG's inclusion in Poverty 3 – the Third EU Anti-Poverty Programme – as the smaller of three Irish projects⁴. In 1990 DTEDG also

⁴ John O Connell (1994) *Reach Out Report by the DTEDG on the Poverty 3 Programme 1990-1994* Pavee Point Publications

acquired and began fundraising to pay for the renovation of the Free Church, now Pavee Point Traveller and Roma Centre, and the process of finding a less tongue twisting name began.

The final feature of Pavee Point's approach to community development with Travellers to be tested and established in the early days was international engagement and solidarity. This involved starting to build links with the United Nations, the Council of Europe and was important for later initiatives with Roma organisations in Europe, through among other things participation in the International Roma Congress in May 1990.

These features have been refined, developed, modified and retested over the years since then, with different priorities emerging at different times. Responses to new and sometimes unforeseen challenges also became an inevitable part of the landscape not least concerned with funding and its problems or the lack of it.

Continuing the Work

Building a critical mass for change was a key Pavee Point priority for the 1990s. Support was given to initiatives around the country to use a community development approach to address discrimination and realise Traveller rights using European and national funds. In this way new initiatives, in Galway, Donegal, Limerick were helped to emerge and existing projects were given ongoing solidarity support and information regarding opportunities.

Pavee Point successfully lobbied for inclusion of commitments to address Traveller issues in the Programme of the incoming Government in 1993. This along with successful solidarity among new voices led to the establishment of the Task Force on the Travelling Community later that year. The Task Force which reported in 1995 reflected a number of Pavee Point's concerns and paved the way for the focus on Travellers in the later Equality Acts. However in spite of the efforts of members, including a Pavee Point worker, and various submissions from groups around the country, it fell short of recognising Traveller ethnicity which remains in 2013 an offensive omission which allows modern versions of old assimilationist ideologies and individual social work pathologies.

Through the 1990s and since then, Pavee Point has sought to strengthen its focus on work with Traveller women. This led to the development in 1998 of the first targeted Traveller women's initiative addressing violence against women, which continues to inform and organise around those issues with Traveller groups and service providers. It also led to a primary healthcare initiative which trained Traveller women as primary healthcare workers. Using community development approaches the project moved beyond the individual interventions required by such work to collective policy and practice advocacy in a number of areas. With support from Pavee Point, the method was replicated around the country and the associated advocacy eventually led to the Our Geels All Ireland Traveller Health Study 2007-2010 for which Pavee Point and others campaigned. Traveller co-researchers contributed substantially to the research

for the report but unfortunately the recommendations based on its stark conclusions remain to be implemented.

Poverty 3 and FÁS (which by then had replaced ANCO) funding provided the resources to strengthen the focus on Traveller identity and culture. The Traveller Cultural Heritage Centre was founded and a number of creative programmes undertaken. These led to publications, the making of a barrel top wagon, audio visual shows⁵ and the organisation, in association with other Traveller groups, of the Annual National Traveller Arts Festivals. The process of taking Traveller culture from the archives to action as an authentic frame of reference, rather than a sub culture of poverty was challenging. It continues to be reflected in Pavee Point's work today, in ways that acknowledge ongoing and living changes but reject assimilation.

Associated but separate early initiatives included a competition for design of a stopping place for Travellers. This was sponsored by the Irish Association in association with DTEDG. Mary Robinson had agreed to lend her support prior to her election as President of Ireland in 1990. One of her first engagements as President elect was to address an international seminar on Discrimination against Travellers in the newly appointed Pavee Point Travellers Centre in October 1990. Evening courses on Travellers and Human Rights – A Rights Approach in Work with Travellers which started in Dublin in the late 1980s and continued around the country in collaboration with other groups through the 1990s helped embed the language and thinking which by now informs the analysis and work of a number of Traveller organisations.

Continued deterioration in relations between Travellers and settled people (including with the Gardaí) made worse by high profile with pictorial media accounts of confrontations led to the Pavee Point Mediation Programme. Training programmes using a variety of inputs to focus on collective rather than only individual outcomes were held, and the project was finally launched in 1999. While the projects founding concern was consequences for Travellers of disempowering relations and confrontations with the authorities it also focused, where necessary, on conflict between Travellers. Over the following decade conflicts between Travellers became more visible, and then increasingly became the main, if not only concern of the state in this field with projects and initiatives now receiving resources to work mainly on these. Pavee Point's efforts in this field has now no direct funding and work on these issues is integrated with programmes overall and media responses.

The need for solidarity and support for Travellers in Ireland and the need for Travellers and Traveller groups to reject isolation and contribute to broader struggles for progress was an established feature of Pavee Point's work from the outset. This was reinforced in the 1990s and since then through Pavee Point contributions to a number of national and regional organisations and groups e.g. the Community Workers Cooperative and the Platform Against Racism.

⁵ Pavee Point (1992) *Traveller Ways Traveller Words* Pavee Point Publications

The 1990s also saw increased movement of Roma to Ireland as asylum seekers. Pavee Point recognising the need for solidarity with their similar struggles began working with them and creating space in Pavee Point for their activities. This work continues through the Roma Project and through integration of Roma in all Pavee Point future plans.

It was clear also by the 1990s that changes required for ending discrimination against Travellers needed support beyond the national level and that Travellers, as well as Roma, needed to be recognised and acknowledged in international initiatives. Pavee Point was involved in the Starting Line group which led the campaign for the EU Equality Directives. Pavee Point workers played active roles in the formation of the European Anti Poverty Network and the European Network against Racism. Submissions were made to UN Treaty bodies and major UN conferences attended and actively engaged with. Outcomes achieved with others included the naming of Travellers in the concluding documents of the UN Conference against Racism (Durban2001) and in Council of Europe initiatives including the European Roma Traveller Forum. This work has continued with a particular and ongoing focus on recognition of Traveller ethnicity, discrimination in policy and practice and lack of implementation of reports and recommendations.

Among recent initiatives, Minceir Whidden, a national Traveller organisation for Travellers founded by Travellers in 2004 marks an important new departure and also a clear echo of the Minceir Misli of the early 1980s. However, as the more recent period in this century is the main focus of this report, the many new initiatives actions of Traveller organisations are not outlined here.

Comment

Even a very light sketch of the early foundation of Pavee Point's community development work and overall approach cannot avoid the questions regarding why the approach managed to survive when others were removed? Why then and who helped? While these require much more deliberation than is possible to begin here, there is no doubt about the importance of the charismatic leadership, intellectual and communication capacities of John O'Connell who was a courageous and contagious force for change until his untimely death in 1999. Ronnie Fay from the outset provided community work expertise and the practical persistence which demanded and ensured outcomes. Between them they won the trust of Travellers, always travelling with them, always challenging. They were joined by others who shared the vision and added skills and capacities from far and near. Travellers who engaged, some already named, made the real difference, becoming courageous and challenging community leaders in their own right.

The independent projects whose work is threatened by the cuts and changes discussed in this report continue to make a difference in various unique ways. The link, through time, challenges and concerns is community development for collective progress.

1b Current Context: community development and the Traveller community

There are 29,573⁶ Travellers in Ireland (2011 census). Travellers have a long history in Ireland, one that is now becoming better known. Travellers, though, have suffered from discrimination, poverty, social exclusion, limited educational opportunities, hardship in accommodation, unemployment and poor health, issues which have been well documented and will not be repeated here.⁷ First, though, the current situation of the Traveller community will be set in the context of Irish social policy and community development.

1.1 The community development approach

The first official recognition of the Traveller community came with the 1963 Report of the Commission on Itinerancy, Travellers then being called 'itinerants'. The precarious situation of Travellers at that time, thrown into sharp relief by rapid economic change and urbanization, prompted the establishment of 'itinerant settlement committees', with the policy of both the state and voluntary organisations largely one of absorption.

The community development approach has a central place in the evolution of the Traveller community in the late 20th century and into this. Community development is based on underlying values of self-determination, equality, non-discrimination and solidarity and is prepared to analyze and confront the manner in which decisions are made and resources are allocated in society. The community development approach proposed a paradigmatic shift in the relationship between the Traveller community and the Irish state.⁸ It challenged the state to view and value the Traveller community as an ethnic group with a distinct culture that was part of a European tradition of nomadic peoples. Community development promoted the autonomy and empowerment of the Traveller community, whilst offering a partnership of shared space for Travellers and settled people to work together, a model far more appropriate than traditional concepts of social work and charity. The approach presented a social analysis that situated Irish Travellers in the distribution of power, equality and opportunity in Irish society, one which identified discrimination and racism as core elements. It proposed a more democratic, participative model that involved Travellers in the agenda and issues affecting them.

Although the community development approach encouraged the state to view Traveller issues from a Traveller perspective and informed research with the Traveller community, the absorptionist, integrationist perspective proved quite resilient. To take three examples, it is still evident in approaches to housing that insufficiently take Traveller preferences into account; in the economy, where there is still little investment in the Traveller economy in comparison to training Travellers for the settled labour market; and in groups which decide on Traveller issues where no Travellers are represented. The community development approach suggested a resourcing of the Traveller community to rectify previous and present imbalances in that relationship; the support of its organisations; and the development of its leadership.

⁶ The Our Geels-All Ireland Traveller Health Study (2010) documents a more accurate figure of 36,224 population

⁷ For a demographic picture, see Central Statistics Office: *Census 2011 - profile 7: religion, ethnicity and Irish Travellers*. Dublin and Cork, 2011; for a social and political context, see Pavee Point: *Irish Travellers and Roma, shadow report - response to Ireland's third and fourth report on the International Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD)*. Dublin, author, 2011.

⁸ This process was outlined in Fay, Ronnie & Crowley, Niall: *Travellers and community work in Community work in Ireland - trends in the 1980s, options for the 1990s*. Dublin, Combat Poverty Agency, 1990 and remains the formative statement of the application of the community development approach in this field.

The Irish state, though, responded badly to Traveller initiatives for self-determination, breaking up the Itinerant Action Group (1963) and deporting its leader (1964), with charges brought against a later Traveller leader who stood for election.

1.2 Engagement with the state

Working from a base of local and national organisations and operating from a perspective of community development, Traveller organisations began a long engagement to ensure that issues affecting Travellers became a part of mainstream political and administrative decision-making; and that resources be allocated in such a way as to rectify the historic imbalance of resources allocated (or not allocated) to Travellers in such areas as housing, accommodation, education and training, employment, enterprise and health. This engagement comprised a number of key elements:

- ◆ The setting down of new and more enlightened national policy frameworks;
- ◆ Development of sectoral strategies for Travellers (e.g. health, accommodation);
- ◆ The installation of an institutional infrastructure to ensure that Travellers may make a structured contribution to policy and practice across key fields (e.g. education) and at both national (e.g. departmental) and local (e.g. local authority) level;
- ◆ Legal change in the key area of discrimination, with the resourcing of work for human rights, anti-racism and equality;
- ◆ The provision of both targeted and mainstreamed resources for the Traveller community to address historic and present inequalities in such areas as accommodation, education, training, employment and health, with systems in place to monitor their progress.

The framework documents, sectoral strategies and infrastructure are reviewed here, for they form an important background to the funding streams reported in chapter 2. The first framework document was the 1963 report, one explicitly committed to a 'permanent solution' of 'absorption'. Over time, its approach came to be regarded as pathological, assimilatory and no longer appropriate, being formally rejected by the Report of the Travelling People Review Body (1983), but its principal recommendation, a national body to promote the welfare of Travellers, fell far short of the substantial change needed in public administration and was not, in any case, actioned.

The most significant step forward at national level was the third review, the Task Force on the Travelling Community, with 341 recommendations (1995). A Traveller Monitoring Committee was established in 1998 to report thereon and it made two subsequent progress reports, 2000 and 2005 when it was disbanded. As part of the National Partnership agreement, *Toward 2016*, a reconstituted National Traveller Monitoring and Advisory Committee was formed in 2006 as an independent forum for dialogue and representative of Travellers nationally and made its first advisory report in 2010. A high-level group on Traveller issues was established in 2003, publishing its first report in 2006. The group, though, meets infrequently; its meetings are not publicly documented and has no Traveller representatives.

As part of a common requirement throughout the European Union, Ireland recently published a National Traveller/Roma Integration Strategy (2012), which is the most recent articulation of national policy.⁹

⁹ *Ireland's National Traveller/Roma Integration Strategy*. Published but unauthored, 2012. Pavee Point is strongly critical of both the content and the process through which the 'strategy' was elaborated; the EU Commission has also highlighted weaknesses such as the need for detailed 'calendar, targets, indicators and budget' as well as 'measures to improve the consultation and political engagement of Roma and Travellers' (COM (2012) 226 Final)

Turning to each sector, in the area of accommodation, a National Strategy for Traveller Accommodation was adopted in 1996, with the establishment of a dedicated Traveller Accommodation Unit in the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government. From 2000, each local authority was required to adopt five-year plans for Traveller accommodation, the subsequent planning rounds being 2000-4, 2005-8, and 2009-2013. In 1999 a National Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee (NTACC) was established under the Housing (Traveller accommodation) Act, 1998, the fourth such committee being appointed in 2010. Its last report, though, dates to 2010. Each local authority is expected to have a Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee.

In 2006, the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government decided to establish Traveller Interagency Groups in each of the 34 City and County Development Board to coordinate services at local level and by 2009, 27 interagency groups had been established.¹⁰ Some, though, do not have Traveller representation.

In the area of health, in 1998, the Department of Health & Children established a National Traveller Health Advisory Committee, with Traveller Health Units subsequently established in each health board area. 2002 saw the first *Traveller health - a national strategy 2002-2005*, key elements of which were primary health care projects and the provision of community health workers. The first all-Ireland health study of Travellers was launched in 2007 and published as *Our Geels-All Ireland Traveller Health Study* in 2010, important in identifying starkly higher mortality and morbidity rates in the Traveller community. In 2008, the Health Service Executive (HSE) developed a *National intercultural health strategy* to guide the delivery of health services to people of different backgrounds, including Travellers. A National Traveller Health Advisory Forum was established by the HSE in 2007, although no documentation therefrom is available.

A Report and recommendations for a Traveller Education Strategy, was published in 2006. An Advisory Committee on Traveller Education (ACTE) was established in the Department of Education & Science in 1998, but it ceased work when the report was published. Eventually, in 2009, a limited Traveller Education Advisory and Consultative Forum was established. The department published *Intercultural education strategy* in 2010. The key milestones in the areas of community development and policy are summarized in table 1.

¹⁰ No unique listing of these groups appears to be available. Although Irish governmental websites have been commended at European level, the volume and utility of government department-based information on the Traveller community is limited.

Table 1: Key milestones in community development and evolution of policy toward Travellers

Community development	Policy
1963 Itinerant Action Group	1963 Report of Commission in Itinerancy
1984 Minceir Misli	1985 Travelling People Review Body
1985 Dublin Travellers Education & Development Group (subsequently Pavee Point)	1995 Task Force on the Travelling Community
1989-94 <i>Poverty 3</i> programme	1996 National Strategy for Traveller Accommodation
1988 National Traveller Women's Forum	1998 National Traveller Monitoring and Advisory Committee
1990 Irish Traveller Movement	National Traveller Health Advisory Committee
2004 Minceir Whidden	1999 National Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee
2008 Traveller Counselling Service	2002 National Traveller Health Strategy
	2003 High Level Officials Group on Travellers
	2006 Interagency groups in local authorities
	Report on Towards a Traveller Education Strategy
	National Traveller Monitoring and Advisory Committee Reconstituted (<i>Toward 2016</i>)
	2008 National Intercultural Health Strategy
	2010 All-Ireland Traveller Health Study
	Intercultural Education Strategy
	2012 National Roma & Traveller Integration Strategy

1.3 Current picture and situation

By this stage, there is a combination of national and local policies in effect, covering a range of sectoral areas, with an infrastructure to promote their monitoring and implementation. Equality legislation from 1998 has formally made discrimination against Travellers an offence, a development underlined by subsequent cases taken to law. These policy developments, with the investment attached to them, has led to significant improvements in the situation of the Traveller community:

- ◆ A reduction of the numbers of Traveller living in unauthorized, hazardous sites;
- ◆ The delivery of dedicated health services to Travellers, delivered by qualified health workers drawn from the Traveller community;
- ◆ Much improved educational enrollment: 100% in primary education, 100% at the start of secondary level, albeit with rapidly declining rates thereafter (55% Travellers have left school by age 15 years), with the first Travellers entering university.
- ◆ Traveller entry into new occupations and professions (medical, paramedical, police, public service, local authorities);
- ◆ A network of dedicated national and local Traveller organisations; This significant progress also suggests the progress that has yet to be achieved:
- ◆ Recognition as a minority ethnic group;
- ◆ A substantial legacy of poor housing and accommodation conditions;
- ◆ Comprehensive and effective protection from discrimination;
- ◆ The need to achieve parity and close the gap with the settled community across a broad set of socio-economic indicators, such as educational attainment, health outcomes, economic and occupational opportunities.

These are some illustrative examples, drawn from the 2011 census and other recent statistics:

- ◆ In education, the second level completion rate is 13%, compared to 90% overall. Third level completions are 1%, compared to 31% of the population as a whole.
- ◆ The unemployment rate in the Traveller community is 84%, compared to 14% in the general population;
- ◆ From mortality rates to life expectancy, there is a huge health gap between Travellers and the settled community. Mortality rates for infants are 14.1‰ compared to 3.9‰ to the overall population. Travellers have dramatically lower lifespans, 11 years less for women (70 compared to 81), 15 years less for men (62 compared to 77). Only 2.3% of Travellers are 65 or over, compared to 11.7% overall.
- ◆ Travellers live in smaller and more over-crowded homes than the settled community. An eighth still live in temporary accommodation and of these a third have no sewerage disposal and one in five has no piped water.
- ◆ 27% of the Traveller community do not have access to a car, compared to 16% of all households. 73% of Traveller households do not have computers and 71% do not have internet access compared to 26% of all households. Taken together, these figures indicate a picture of social exclusion.

1.4 Conclusions

The emergence of the community development approach reversed the assimilationist approach toward the Traveller community and informed the introduction of a range of policies, structures, initiatives and an infrastructure of organisations, leading to concrete progress in such area as education, health and accommodation. Nevertheless, the gap between the Traveller community and the settled community in key economic and social economic indicators remains wide. Despite progress in the development of both national and sectoral strategies for Travellers, implementation has fallen far short of the aspirations of these strategies. The systems of structured engagement through advisory and consultative committees have yet to translate into a substantial shift in outcomes. The next chapter will look at the pattern of progress in the key area of resources and funding, drawn into sharp relief by the economic crisis since 2008.

2 Austerity and the Traveller community

As noted in chapter 1, the community development approach was a significant challenge to the traditional relationship of the Traveller community with the state and public administration, prompting a change in the allocation of resources and the preparedness of the state to support initiatives designed to improve the well-being and equality of the Traveller community. From the 1980s, the state began an investment in the form of provision for education, accommodation, health, community development, equality and related fields, both through specialized, targeted programmes and mainstream funding.

The purpose of this chapter is to examine the nature of this investment following the economic and social crisis that broke on Ireland in 2008.¹¹ Since then, the government has introduced budgets that have slowed and then reduced government spending. In 2010, Ireland entered an agreement to receive international financial assistance from three funds, what is called the troika or International Monetary Fund (IMF) régime. Under the *National Recovery Plan, 2011-2014*, Ireland is committed to a further two austerity budgets, for 2014 and 2015. Even assuming Ireland's emergence from the IMF in 2015, the present government is still committed to meeting substantial outstanding bank debt which will be a burden for many years to come. This chapter reviews general trends (2.1) before looking at the specific changes that have affected the Traveller community (2.2). Conclusions are drawn (2.3). Comments from Traveller organizations, representatives and focus groups are given in the text.

2.1 General features, 2008-2013

Despite uninformed, superficial media presentation that austerity has inflicted a broadly similar impact across the entire community, this is not in fact the case. An empirical examination of the austerity measures taken since 2008 shows that:

- ◆ Lower income groups and communities have been most affected, while some high incomes have been left untouched. Cuts have most affected areas of social spending;¹²
- ◆ The reduction of the size of government has most affected areas in the field of social policy, while new agencies in the economic field have been created;¹³
- ◆ Voluntary and community organizations working with the disadvantaged have suffered disproportionate levels of cuts, generally in the order of 8 - 10% yearly.¹⁴

Contrary to popular perceptions, the overall level of government spending has fallen little since 2008. Government spending in 2008 was €53.4bn and has fallen, over the past five years, to €51.1bn, down -4.3%, or less than a percent a year and this is the baseline against which our examination of government spending should be measured. Here, this chapter looks at the impact of spending cuts on those areas that most affect, directly or indirectly, the Traveller community, taking information from the government's own documentation. This relies on the annual estimates, which provide

¹¹ The terms used here will be 'economic and social crisis' and 'austerity'. The term 'recession' will be avoided, for it means two consecutive quarters lacking economic growth, a misleading euphemism for a -20% contraction in the economy. The precise advent of the crisis can be assigned to a number of points: the collapse of Anglo (St Patrick's Day, 2008); the first government memorandum announcing the need for €1.4bn cuts (8th July); and then the first budget based on reduced spending (14th October).

¹² Social Justice Ireland: *Poverty and income distribution; Shaping Ireland's future, Socio-economic Review*, 2012. Dublin, author, 2012.

¹³ Examples of abolished social policy agencies are the National Economic and Social Forum; the National Council for Ageing and Older People; Comhar; the Homeless Agency; and the Office for Active Citizenship. Examples of new economic agencies are the National Asset Management Agency; newERA; the Fiscal Advisory Council; and Uisce Éireann.

¹⁴ Irish Congress of Trade Unions: *Downsizing the voluntary and community sector*. Dublin, author, 2012.

detail on figures; and other information that focusses on individual programmatic areas (e.g. education). Information provided in the focus groups or from experts is inserted at appropriate points in the text.

2.2 Specific effects on the Traveller community

Government spending information does not neatly identify budgets destined for the Traveller community and budgets destined elsewhere, except in the case of a small number of specific Traveller-only programmes, such as the accommodation programme. To cover the entire area of spending that affects Travellers, we need to look at a broad set of headings and make informed interpretations as to their likely impact on the Traveller community.

2.2.1 Community development

Table 1 looks at a supports for voluntary and community organizations across several headings, including national voluntary organisations working with Travellers. The Local and Community Development Programme (LCDP) provides funding for partnership companies to work with disadvantaged communities, including Travellers and also includes funding for 14 Traveller Community Development Projects (CDPs) under the National Traveller Partnership (NTP). Since 2009 the HSE acts as the conduit for funding for Traveller CDPs in the South of Ireland (Traveller Visibility Group Cork; Clonakilty Travellers and Kerry Travellers). Southside Travellers Action Group is funded through the Local Development Company. Pavee Point is also funded under the LCDP as a specialist support agency. The community social inclusion head includes funding for local voluntary and community fora, which are important places of consultation between community groups and local government. The Community Services Programme includes, within it, funding for a number of Traveller social economy projects. The youth organisations budget includes what are called SPY (Special Projects for disadvantaged Youth), which includes a number of Traveller youth projects.

Table 2: Main funding streams in community development €m

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	%
LCDP	84.7	74.6	67.5	63.5	54.8	48.8	-42.3%
Supports voluntary organizations	18.6	15.6	14	10	10.6	11.8	-36.6%
Community social inclusion	1.4	1.3	*	0.587	*	*	
Initiatives against drugs	44.3	40.6	36.3	33.8	31.4	29.9	-32.5%
Community Services Programme	55	51	46	47	45	46	-16%
Special Projects for Youth (SPY)	21.4	19.9	19.5	18.2	17	*	-20.6
Traveller SPY funding	0.9					0.64p	-28.9%

Source: Department of Public Expenditure and Reform: *Estimates, 2008-2013*. Dublin, author. Notes: * Not recorded separately in these years; p=projected; SPY details: Dail Eireann, *Debates*, 12th February 2013, 335.

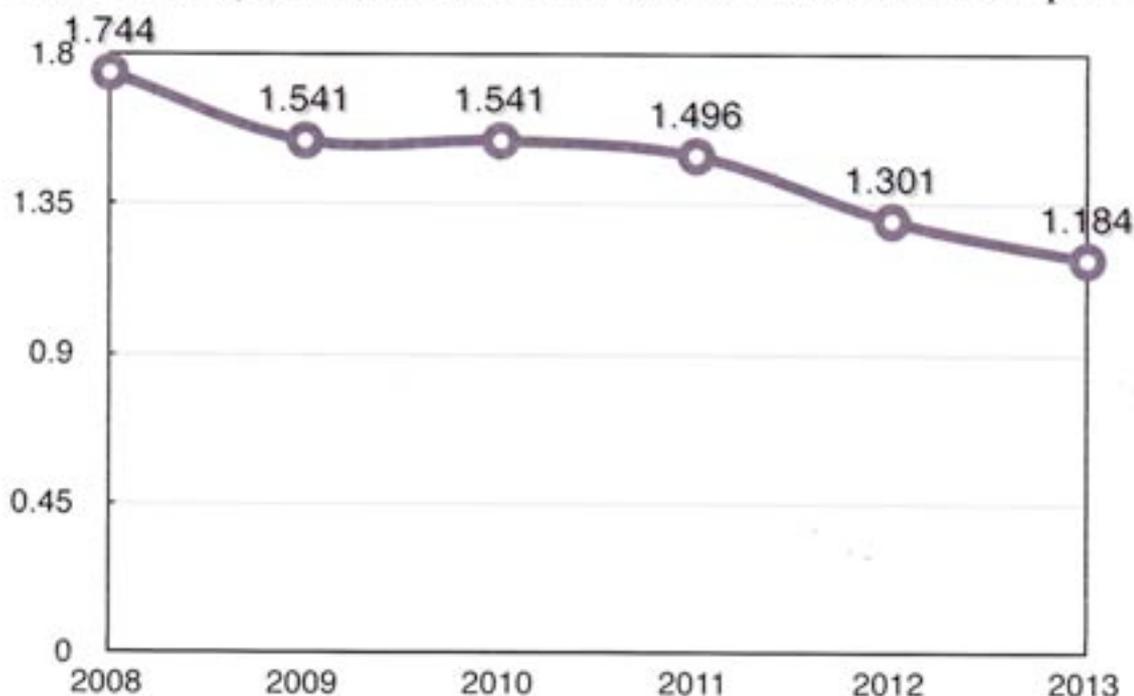
As may be seen, some of these figures are unsatisfactory, with some 2012 and 2013 information neither available or separately identified. The first line is the Local and Community Development Programme (LCDP), the flagship programme for local and community development. Travellers are an identified target group for the LCDP, whose annual report of the LCDP cites a number of examples of work with Travellers.¹⁵

¹⁵ e.g. *Case study – The Ballymun School Attendance Initiative* cited in Pobal: *Local and Community Development Programme - progress report, 2011*. Dublin, author, 2012.

Overall, though, the numbers of Travellers assisted by the programme are small and less than 1% of the beneficiary group: 221 of goal 2 (education and training); and 119 under goal 3 (work readiness) (out of 40,292). Nevertheless, the fall in budget for this programme represents a reduction of state investment in local and community development of -42.3% from 2008 to 2013, almost ten times the overall rate of fall in spending.

Within the LCDP, several specialized areas of work are funded separately. Chart 1 provides detail of the funding of the 14 Traveller CDPs within the National Traveller Partnership.

Chart 1: Funding of Traveller CDPs in the National Traveller Partnership €m



Source: National Traveller Partnership

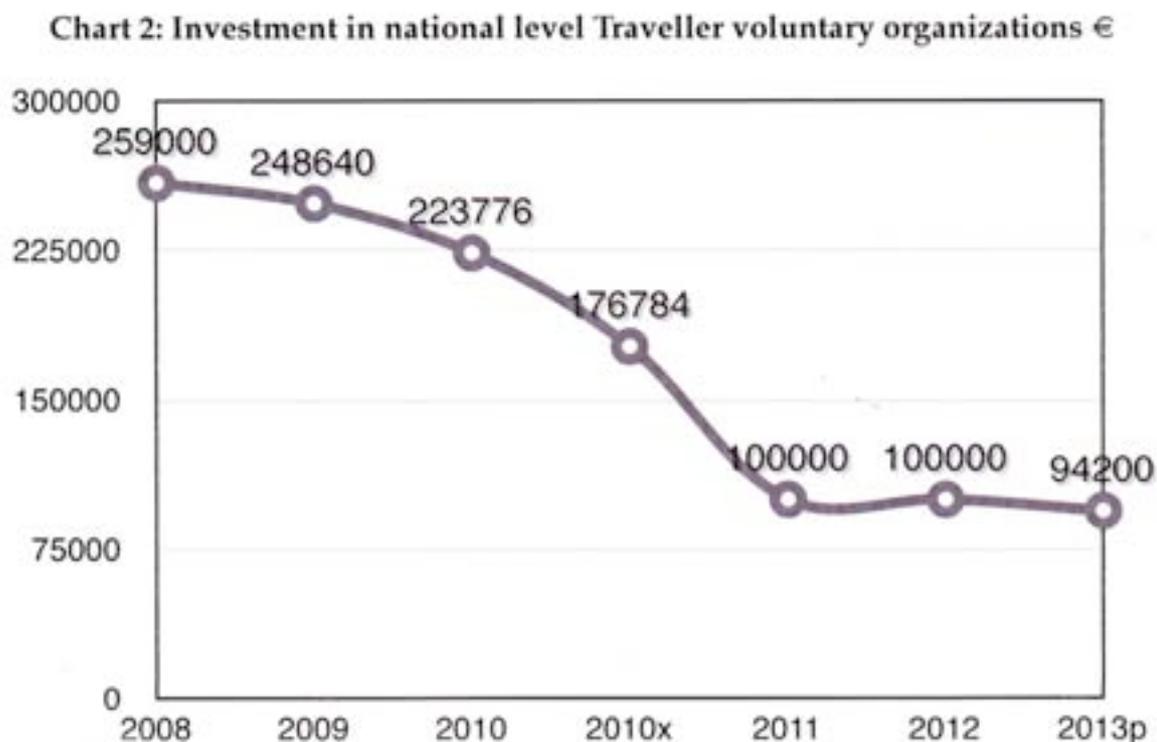
This shows a decline from €1.744m to €1.184m, or -32.1%, set against our benchmark of the overall fall in government spending of -4.3%. In real costs, -32.1% is higher if we take inflation into account. If we look next at the heading of support for national voluntary and community organisations, a number of Traveller organisations are funded through the scheme of supports for national networks and federations introduced originally under the white paper *Supporting voluntary activity* (2000). The following table, table 3, lists the funding of those national Traveller organisations in receipt of funding under this stream 2008-2012, giving annual allocations. These are the National Traveller Women's Forum (NTWF) and the National Association of Traveller Centres (NATC) (which received funding for 2008-2011, but not subsequently) and the Irish Traveller Movement (ITM), which has been funded throughout the period. Pavee Point as a national Traveller organisation continues to be funded under the LCDP.

Table 3: Funding of national Traveller organisations 2008-2013 €
Pavee Point as a national Traveller organisation is funded through the LCDP.

	NTWF	ITM	NATC	Total
2008	53,000	153,000	53,000	259,000
2009	50,880	146,880	50,880	248,640
2010	45,792	132,192	45,792	223,776
2010x	36,176	104,432	36,176	176,784
2011		100,000		100,000
2012		100,000		100,000
2013p		94,200		94,200

Notes: 2010x = extension programme while the new programme was made ready; p = projected. NATC was subsequently renamed Involve.

If we present this as a chart, we can see the overall level of investment (chart 2):



As may be seen, the fall of investment is -63.6%. If we look at the other funding headings, we see a substantial fall in funding for initiatives against drugs, -32.5%, which adversely affects local Traveller projects attempting to obtain funding for local anti-drugs projects (six projects have active drug programmes), reductions which put young people at risk. We do not have satisfactory figures on the social inclusion for a, apart from noting a drop of -58% in the time where we have information. The Department of Children and Youth Affairs did not have annual data for Traveller SPY projects, but we do have beginning and end figures for the seven Traveller SPY projects and the 11 part-funded projects.¹⁶ This fell from €900,000 in 2008 to €640,000 in 2013p, down -29%.¹⁷ The projects concerned have been obliged to limit their work to

¹⁶ Dail Eireann, *Debates*, 12th February 2013, 336.

¹⁷ Information supplied by Involve.

‘survival mode’, reducing both full-time and part-time hours and have been unable to carry out any new developmental work with young people.

It is worth noting that the infrastructure of the Traveller community at national level is not matched at local level. Although most urban areas, towns and even villages now have extensive community facilities (e.g. halls), this is not the case for the Traveller community, which often faces difficulties in finding places to meet.

The Community Services Programme has, after an initial sharp fall, maintained a level of funding, being down -16% overall, mainly accounted for by a reduction in non-wage grants. In 2007, there was an appeal for projects for particular areas of interest, leading to funding for nine Traveller social economy projects¹⁸ and table 4 provides details:

Table 4: funding for Traveller social enterprise projects

2008	€544,599
2009	€837,962
2010	€1,062,930
2011	€1,110,213
2012	€1,115,936

Source: Pobal

This shows an increase of +104.9%, attributable to the time it took for the projects to mature; the priority given by government to job creation measures; and the closure of other projects in the programme. Although there was no special policy in place to protect Traveller projects, the outcome illustrates that it can be and is possible to maintain spending for critically vulnerable groups during austerity.

2.2.2 Housing and accommodation

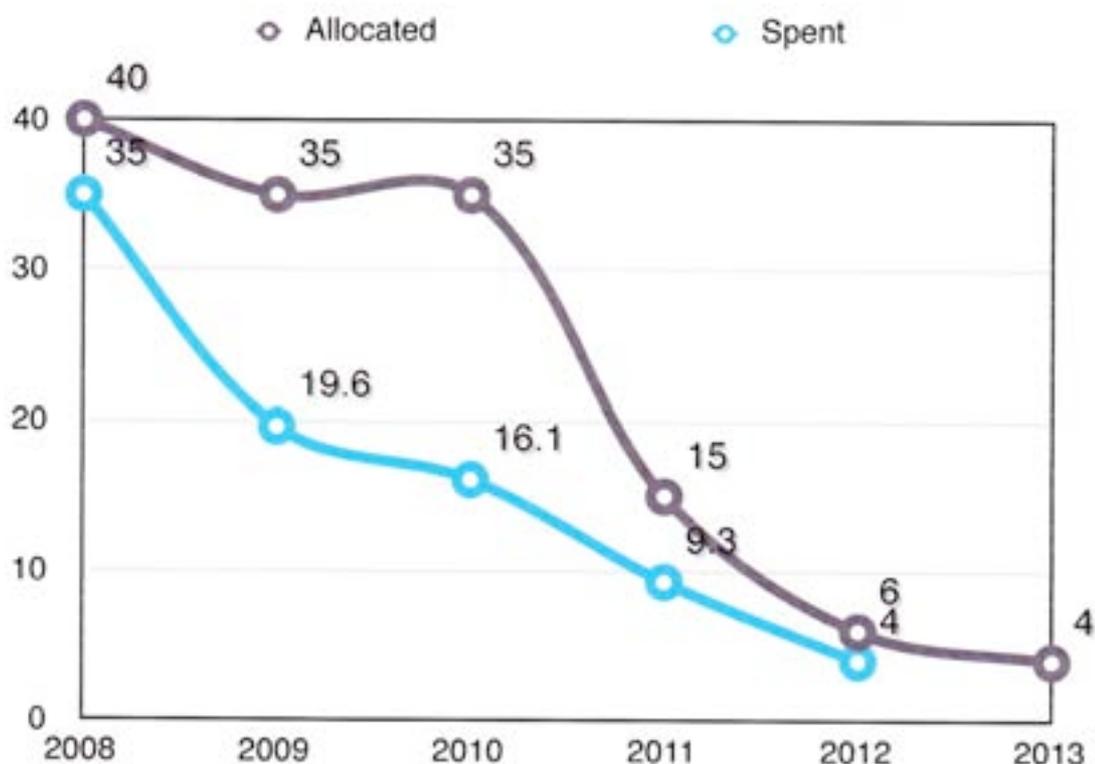
Accommodation is one of the most critical issues for the Traveller community. Improvements in health, for example, are ultimately dependent on the quality and environmental health of accommodation. As was the case during the previous economic and social crisis (1987), state housing budgets were sharply reduced. Overall, the social housing budget fell from €1.6bn in 2008n to €299m in 2013 (-80%).¹⁹ The Housing (Capital Assistance) Scheme was reduced from €130m in 2008 to €70.7m in 2012 (-45%). The principal allocation of interest here is the dedicated line for Traveller accommodation and this is detailed in chart 3. The budget includes a combination of capital spending (by far the largest part) and a small amount for accommodation-related supports (management, maintenance of sites; social workers); and funds for the purchase of homes.²⁰

¹⁸ Revamp Furniture Recycling, Aonad, LIFTS, Revamp Furniture, Ballina Heritage Costume, Shuttle Knit, Voice of the Traveller, First Class Insulation, Traveller Equine Initiative.

¹⁹ Dail Eireann, *Debates*, 5th February 2013, 254-5; 19th February 2013, 350.

²⁰ The house purchase fund therein was €3m in 2009; €5m in 2010; €2m in 2011 and €329,000 in 2012. Source: Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government.

Chart 3: funding for Traveller accommodation €m



Source: Dail Eireann, *Debates*, 6th December 2012, 857-8; 12th February 2013, 267. 2013 allocation reported but not confirmed.

This is a fall in allocations from €40m in 2008 to €6m in 2012, down -85%. Assuming the final allocation figure for 2013 is confirmed at €4m, this would represent a decline of 90%. A further problem is that substantial parts of the allocation are unspent. The proportion spent is detailed in table 5:

Table 5: Proportion Traveller accommodation budget spent

	Spent	Unspent
2008	88%	12%
2009	56%	44%
2010	46%	54%
2011	62%	38%
2012	66%	34%

Figures rounded.

This gives an averaged figure of 63.6% of the budget spent, or, conversely, 36.4% unspent. If we measure the total cut according to the amount actually spent (€35m falling to €4m) then the overall reduction is higher, -88.6%.

It is remarkable, at a time of pressure on Traveller accommodation, that significant funds of money already allocated are not being drawn down and revert to the department unspent.²¹ The issue has been endemic for years and has never been convincingly explained. What we do know is that the need for accommodation is great and progress slow. Looking at need, the 2011 national housing needs survey found

²¹ Dublin City Council, for example, spent only €3.77m of its €15.85m allocation for 2007-2012, only 23%, while the proportion for Cork was even less, 18%: see Crosbie, Judith: *Three councils did not use €24m for Traveller housing*. *Irish Times*, 25th February 2013.

1,824 Traveller households in need of accommodation.²² Looking at progress, the number of Travellers provided with social housing was 135 households in 2009, 123 in 2010 and 136^e in 2011.²³ In 2010, accommodation totals were 20 new halting bays, 20 bays refurbished, 25 group housing schemes and 14 houses purchased.²⁴ Traveller organisations report that:

- ◆ Little new accommodation appears to be available, although some refurbishment has been carried out;
- ◆ There are considerable levels, in sites, of bays being doubled up with caravans. This is especially the case for young families who now double up with the parents. In some cases, up to three caravans were put in the space designed for one;
- ◆ Significant numbers of Travellers are now living in dispersed private rented accommodation. The proportion of Travellers in private rented accommodation has risen from 7% in 1998 to 32% in 2011, a dramatic change.²⁵ Private rented accommodation breaks up the traditional pattern of Travellers living in extended families in such proximity as to be able to offer each other mutual support, detaching families from their communities, leaving them isolated and vulnerable to mental ill-being and the risk of substance abuse.

Traveller organisations report that in places where there is no refurbishment, 'we received letters from the council to tell us that it could no longer do small repairs. Remember that these homes are substandard anyway. There are already gaps between the walls and the windows, but in the absence of repairs they get wider'. Another: 'We have what is called low-energy-rating housing, which is supposed to be a priority for refurbishment, but it hasn't happened.' 'Our local authority had only €25,000 for accommodation last year, which it decided to spend on repairs - but even that can't go very far'.

The solution of sending Travellers into private rented accommodation is resented: 'people are isolated there, they can't settle and public health nurses are now having to visit them to help them there'. Landlords expected substantial top-ups to their rent supplements. According to one spokesperson, 'private rented accommodation has big implications for mental health arising from isolation, reduced contact with extended families and sometimes landlords not allowing visitors. It can really break up the Traveller community'.

A recent provision was the Traveller Accommodation Loan Scheme, which assisted Travellers to buy a new caravan, typical loans being €6,000 to €10,000, the repayments deducted from social welfare, but it has proved highly problematical with some caravans worth much less than their loan value.

Some projects report that where progress is made, it is fortuitous. One project reported that a large family had got housing in a big house - but only because it was derelict and abandoned. Another reported that after years of languishing neglected, the move was suddenly on to re-house an entire site - but only because a prominent multi-national industry needed to extend its car park. Other sites, though, languish. Spring Lane in Cork, for example, is a well-publicized case of a 33-family site described as 'third world, a health hazard and dangerous' due to its location in a quarry, but where the latest plan was voted down by councillors and no progress has been made.

²² Housing Agency: *Housing needs assessment, 2011*. Dublin, author, 2011.

²³ Department of Public Expenditure & Reform: *Revised estimates*, p106.

²⁴ National Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee: *Annual report, 2010*. Dublin, author.

²⁵ Crosbie, Judith: 'For three years we have been living and sleeping in one room.' *Irish Times*, 25th February 2013.

2.2.3 Social protection

Social protection is a key issue for the Traveller community, for it funds all welfare payments, for example unemployment assistance and child benefit. The 2010 budget saw a reduction in across-the-board rates (-4.1%), while other budgets saw changes to a broad range of ancillary benefits, with the introduction of fresh charges. These changes of course affect all welfare claimants, but impact especially hard on a community where incomes are low and unemployment high. Here, table 6 summarizes some of the key benefit changes that have taken place over 2008-2013.

Table 6: Principal social welfare changes 2008-2013

Child benefit: Reduced from €166 to €130; to €140 for fourth and subsequent child.
 Job Seeker Allowance (JA), Benefit (JB) reduced from €204.30 to €188 (adult single rate), €144 (ages 23-24) and €100 weekly (ages 18-22). Supplementary Welfare Allowance rate reduced from €204.30 to €186 weekly. Job Seeker Benefit entitlement reduced, as of April 2013, to between nine to six months duration (for those with more and less than 260 contributions respectively), with changes in working taken into account. Christmas bonus: removed, equivalent to a 2% cut in income.
 Back To Education Allowance: €300 annual grant abolished; new participant rate at JA.
 Rent supplements: Minimum contribution raised to €30 individuals, €35 couples, with caps on maximum rentals paid revised according to market conditions; increases in local authority rents.
 Back to school clothing and footwear allowance reduced from €200 for 2-11 years, €305 for 11-17 to €200 and €100 respectively. Charges for primary school transport raised from €50 to €100.
 Prescriptions for medical card holders: Introduction of 50c charge, increased 2013 to €1.50, monthly ceiling of €19.50; limits set on dental treatment (e.g. two fillings).
 Introduction of household charge from 2012: €100; local property tax from 2013; introduction in some local authority areas of privatized bin charges.
 Fuel allowance reduced from 32 weeks to 26 weeks.
 For those working, introduction of universal social charge (2%, 4%, 7%, 10% bands).
 €130 charge for hospital admission without GP referral - which can be difficult for Travellers to get.
 VAT increased from 21% to 23% in 2012, especially affecting low income groups.²⁶

Such changes have considerable implications for the budgets of low-income households and especially for Travellers, long identified as a group at high risk of poverty. Most welfare benefits in Ireland are set at a level well below that of the poverty line (€209 in 2011), meaning that their recipients will certainly live in poverty. Although there had been a reduction in the proportions below the poverty line in the early years of this century, these numbers began to rise again, from 14.1% in 2009 to 16% in 2011.²⁷

Traveller projects and spokespersons have reported on the practical outcomes of these welfare changes.

All the cuts in social welfare have detrimental effects on Traveller families. Three meals a day is not always possible for some families. Paying for heating is seen as a luxury that most people try and do without. Travellers on their own have little money to live on, while those living in families are under great stress.

Less money means that people can't afford fuel, so they go to bed early just to keep warm.

Setting unemployment assistance at €100 for a young person is all very well, but Travellers have children at a young age and you can't rear a family on €100 a week.

²⁶ VAT changes most impact on lower income groups: 14.9% on the lowest income decile, compared to 6.83% on the top (Social Justice Ireland: *Budget 2012 - analysis and critique*. Dublin, author, 2011). Items affected include, for example, clothes, fuel, repairs and essential bathroom items.

²⁷ Central Statistics Office: *Survey of income and living conditions*. Dublin, CSO, 2013.

Parents have greater difficulty feeding their children and there are even reports of stealing for food.

All these cuts have a considerable cumulative effect. You may be able to manage your children's allowance if you have a job, but not if you don't. How do you manage seven children's packed school lunches on so much less?

The Department of Social Protection has funded, through the Citizens Information Board, a National Traveller Money Advice and Budgeting Service (NTMABS) since 1998. The level of funding has been relatively steady and has increased over the period: €261,829 in 2008; €307,010 in 2009; €322,543 in 2010, €318,999 in 2011 and €345,371 in 2012, up +31.9%.²⁸

2.2.4 Health

As seen in chapter 1, this century saw the introduction of the Traveller health strategy and publication of the first national health study. The strategy was designed to improve delivery of health services to the Traveller community and thereby improve the individual quality of health and life. The Traveller health strategy was accompanied by a funding package, in which funding was allocated for Traveller Health Units (THUs) to develop dedicated programmes, principally through primary health care projects. If we look at the overall health budget from 2008 to 2013, it has been remarkably steady at €12.3bn. However the most significant cuts to Traveller Health predated Austerity and were implemented with the establishment of the HSE and the 'break-even' circular March 2007. It is estimated that the cuts to Traveller health budget are in the region of 40% since 2007 e.g. out of a potential €2m allocated for Traveller health development funding in 2007-2008 €1.8m was used to balance the HSE books.²⁹

Within that, funding for voluntary bodies, including voluntary hospitals, has fallen from €2.6bn to €2.1bn, while funding for regional HSE services (which affect grants for voluntary services) has fallen more sharply, from €9.2 to €6.6bn (-28%). Typically, falls in funding for voluntary organisations supported by the health services have been much less than community development groups, around -5% annually. The small number of Traveller CDPs funded by the HSE in the South has been warned of a -5% cut this year, 2013.

If we look specifically at the funding provided under the Traveller health strategy, the allocation has been in the order of almost €12m, one which had been relatively steady. The problem, though, as is the case with Traveller accommodation, is that substantial amounts appear to be unspent, though, unlike the case of housing, the funding is not returned to the department but reallocated to other health services, especially those which, by the autumn, are overspent.³⁰ Chart 4 gives details of spending on health services under the health strategy:

²⁸ Dail Eireann, *Debates*, 12th February 2013, 240.

²⁹ Oireachtas Committee on Health March 2009

³⁰ The reallocation of dedicated funding to meet overspends elsewhere has been a reported feature of health spending for some time: for a recent example, see O'Brien, Carl: *Funds for suicide prevention diverted*. *Irish Times*, 29th December 2012.

Chart 4: Allocations and spending under Traveller health strategy €m
(2012-2013 projected)



Source: Dail Eireann, Debates, 11th July 2012, 567; Council of Europe: *Third report on the framework convention for the protection of national minorities*. Strasbourg, author, 2011; Minister for Health, James Reilly to Caoimhghain O Caolain TD, 25th July 2011. The Department of Health is unable to give a precise figure for 2012 and 2013 allocations, apart from stating that they may be expected to be <5% lower than each preceding year, so calculations have been made accordingly (Dail Eireann, Debates, 31st January 2013, 784). 2012 and 2013 spend projected based on earlier averages (see over).

Overall, this gives us a reduction of *allocations* of -5.37%, but, as noticed in other earlier cases, this is complicated by underspends. Extracting and calculating health figures has proved difficult, as, unlike Traveller accommodation, it is not listed as a separate budget head. The HSE made a detailed attempt to identify spending on the Traveller community, both through the THUs and mainstream funding, but separating these funds from those allocated under the health strategy has proved to be daunting and there is evidence of a leakage of funds from one to the other, compounded by a lack of effective tracking.³¹ Nevertheless, it is possible to make a calculation of the underspend for 2008-2011, as may be seen in table 7.

³¹ de Brun, Concepta: *Report to National Traveller advisory Committee on Traveller health finances 2006-2011*. Dublin, HSE, 2012.

Table 7: underspend of funding of the Traveller health strategy

	<u>Spent</u>	<u>Unspent</u>
2008	80%	20%
2009	83%	17%
2010	81%	19%
2011	86%	14%

Figures rounded.

This gives us an *averaged* spend of 82.1%, or conversely an average underspend of 17.9%. Projecting this rate into 2012-2013 would give us a spend of €9.62m and €9.11m respectively. To determine the rate of cuts, we can therefore use two figures, one based on the rate of allocation, which fell from €11.73m to €11.1m, or - 5.37%; or by using the spend rates, which fell from €9.36m to €9.11m, we get a smaller fall of - 2.7%. Although the underspend rates are neither as volatile nor as large as Traveller accommodation, they must be difficult to justify, granted the known disparity between Traveller well-being and the health of the rest of the community.

The outcomes of health cuts on the Traveller community have already been documented.³² There is a danger that gains in health information and preventative measures (e.g. vaccination, smear tests, cancer tests) may be lost. Dealing with one project, the Pavee Point Primary Health Care Project experienced a reduction in funding of its base budget of -11.5%. This has impacted on services and interventions, such as suicide prevention (already six times higher in the Traveller community) and mental health. Traveller projects have noted a retreat in the progress made in the early years of the health strategy:

The setback is especially evident in the area of alcohol issues. The reduction in allowances and lack of education and work opportunities have created apathy, despondency and a lack of hope. People who didn't drink before do so now, while others are drinking more.

The HSE social work service has collapsed to the point that CDP workers have to go 'on call' instead.

A key test for the Traveller Health Strategy is the number of community health workers available, but the Department of Health did not have such information readily available for 2008-2012.³³ When it was supplied, the regional-only statistics were not nationally comparable.³⁴ Travellers have also experienced reductions in dedicated Public Health Nursing services available to them throughout the country.

2.2.5 Labour market

In the field of employment, the national training authority, FAS initiated in 2005 the Special Initiative for the employment of Travellers, sometimes called FAS SIT. This had an enterprise and an employment strand, which provided Traveller Support Workers, or Job Coaches, to provide assistance in funding employment and in enterprise development (e.g. registration of companies, sole traders, training and licence qualifications). The programme was piloted in four regions and then extended, through the inter-agency programme (2.2.6) to the City and County Development Boards, with 12 initial projects. It was decided in 2011 to mainstream the programme.³⁵ Eight projects were still reportedly running in 2012, but we have no information on

³² Pavee Point: *Impact of reductions in funding on the primary health care for Travellers project*. Dublin, author, 2012.

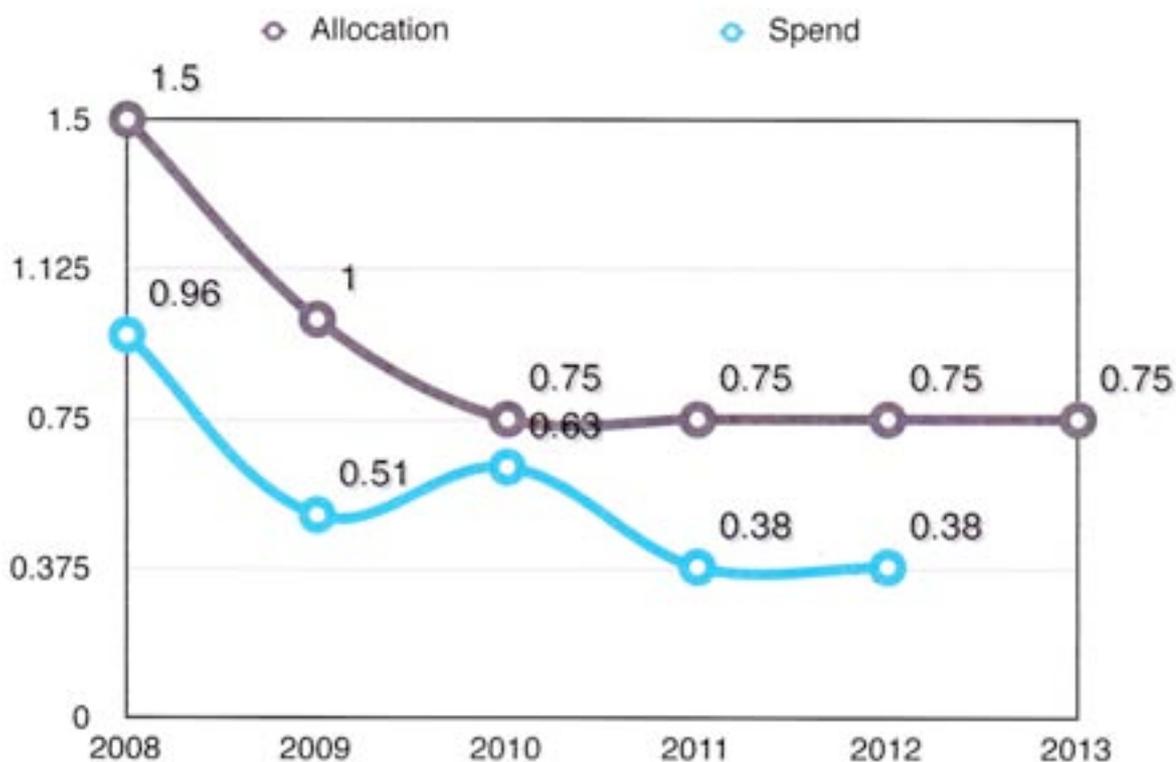
³³ Dail Eireann, *Debates*, 12th February 2013, 375.

³⁴ Minister for Health, Dr James Reilly, to Aengus O Snodaigh TD, 12th March 2013.

³⁵ FAS: *Annual report, 2010, 2011*. Dublin, author; Dail Eireann, *Debates*, 12th February 2013, 239.

Traveller participation after this point. Chart 5 summarizes the allocation and spend on FAS SIT. The number of Travellers participating was 645 in 2008, 459 in 2009, 611 in 2010 and 570 in 2011.

Chart 5: funding of FAS Special Initiative for Travellers €m



Source: Dail Eireann, *Debates*, 12th February 2013, 239.

As may be seen spend rates have been much lower than allocations 64%, 51%, 84%, 51% and 51% respectively, an average of 60%. According to the Minister for Social Protection, 'the implementation of the SIT underwent a significant change in 2011 resulting in a broad number of the actions being integrated into the core work of the contracting agents with a reduction in the level of expenditure'.³⁶

These figures give a fall of 50% on the 2008 allocation. The Department of Social Protection also has an *Activation and family support* line, €510,067 in 2008. This is a small grant fund of €5,000, normally co-funded, available to partnerships and voluntary and community organisations, to enable them to work with unemployed Travellers. No figures are available of allocations or spending since then, nor of the outcomes. The internship scheme in government departments, which was popular and over-subscribed, was discontinued.

Traveller projects painted a difficult picture of the labour market situation. There was a sense of despair at the lack of employment prospects: 'We are always fighting for children to go right through the education system - but what is the point if there is nothing at the other end?' Projects report that discrimination against Travellers in employment is as great as ever. Most training, they said, seemed geared to the newly

³⁶ Dail Eireann, *Debates*, 12th February 2013, 239.

unemployed, not most Travellers who have been out of work for some time, the Long Term Unemployed. The reduction in allowances for participation in Community Employment meant that it was now only worthwhile for single people. In-work poverty was a definite problem: 'if you get work, you are terrified of losing the medical card and then you can't get medical care for the children'. Some asked that their wages be reduced to the maximum that you could legally get before losing the medical card, but as a result they were working far below the minimum wage.

Apart from the social economy programme (table 4, above), little effort appeared to have been made to create new employment opportunities for Travellers in the recycling industry, which was the logical extension of the Traveller economy: 'We could have recycled the electronic voting machines, but weren't given the opportunity'. Traveller social economy projects still have to hide their identity, for fear of losing customers.

2.2.6 Equality and rights

Four state agencies were of particular importance to the Traveller community. First, the Combat Poverty Agency had been an important advocate for the Traveller community and had provided, through its grant schemes, some financial assistance for individual projects. Second, the Equality Authority had a specific statutory task to promote equality on grounds of ethnic background through its case work, promotional activities and small grants schemes. Third, the Irish Human Rights Commission was tasked with promoting human rights under Irish law and our international commitments, these being especially important for those whose rights have, thus far, been least affirmed. Fourth, the National Consultative Committee on Racism and Interculturalism (NCCRI) was important for developing policies against racism and for interculturalism, core issues for the Traveller community.³⁷ The following table, 8, charts the funding of the four agencies concerned.

Table 8: Funding of agencies concerned with poverty, equality and rights €

	<u>2008</u>	<u>2009</u>	<u>2010</u>	<u>2011</u>	<u>2012</u>	<u>2013</u>
Combat Poverty	4.5m	4m	0	0	0	0
Equality Authority	5.5m	3.3m	3m	2.4m	2.9m*	4.41m
Irish Human Rights Commission	2.3m	1.6m	1.5m	1.1m	1.4m*	}
NCCRI	0.497m	0	0	0	0	0
National Action Plan on Racism	1.543m	0	0	0	0	0
Totals	14.34m					4.41m

*These were not relative increases, but reflected underspends the previous year. 2013 figure: Dail Eireann, Debates, 12th February 2013, 298.

The Combat Poverty Agency and the NCCRI were abolished, while, as may be seen, funding for the Equality Authority and the IHRC were sharply reduced, with the government announcing their merger in 2011. In addition to the NCCRI allocation, €1.543m was set aside for the National Action Plan on Racism, but this was discontinued. By the end of 2013, only one of the four institutions listed in 2008 will be standing, the combined budget being €4.41m, compared to €7.8m in 2008, down -43%. If we look at the overall budget, including the action plan, the measure of state investment in this area has fallen from €14.34m to €4.41m, down -69%. The

³⁷ The Department of Justice and Equality also funds the Office of the Minister for Integration (now the Integration Division in Dept.), whose budget is down from €9.3m in 2008 to €2.5m in 2012 (down - 73%), but it does not deal with Travellers.

The Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform, later the Department of Justice & Equality, has a budget line for Travellers called *Equality monitoring/consultation committees*, subsequently retitled *Traveller initiatives* (table 9).

Table 9: Department of Justice & Equality funding for Travellers €

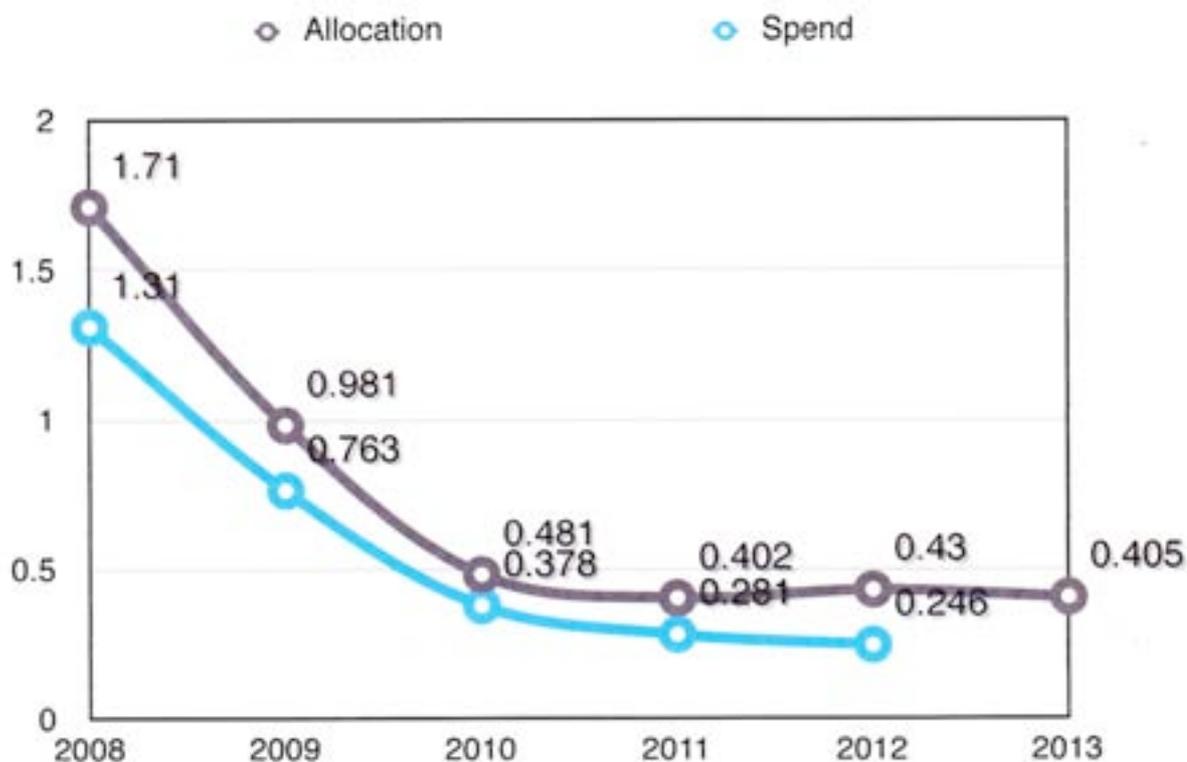
	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Monitoring	100,000	0	0	0	0
Participation, communications	108,717	136,127	25,236	4,796	21,197
National Traveller Monitoring Advisory Committee	3,129	12,561	11,221	9,252	16,883
Mediation	135,000	135,000	114,543	70,734	108,864
Interagency	963,154	479,312	227,000	196,218	99,056
Interagency (dormant accounts)		375,001	526,919	208,742	

Source: *Dail Eireann, Debates, 12th February 2013, 196-8.*

The Traveller interagency fund supported 47 projects through the local authorities from 2006 until March 2012 when it appears to have closed.³⁸ If that is the case, it marks a withdrawal of the state from funding interagency work, which only a few years ago was considered a priority. The following chart, 6 gives details of the overall departmental allocation whose details were set out in table 9 (but not including the dormant accounts allocation for part of the period, 2009-2011).

³⁸ Pobal: *Report on the Traveller interagency programme*. Dublin, author, 2012. Pobal confirms that the last payments were made in 2012.

Chart 6: allocation and spend, Department of Justice and Equality allocation for Travellers



Source: *Dail Eireann, Debates, 12th February 2013, 299*

The overall budgetary reduction from 2008 to 2013 is -76.3%. As the chart shows, spend trails behind allocations, 76.6%, 77.7%, 78.5%, 69.9% and 57.2%, the average being 72% (conversely, 28% is unspent).

The Department of Justice and Equality is responsible for women's equality and the protection of women from violence. Here, the Traveller Violence Against Women (VAW) project has experienced a reduction in funding of 20% since 2008 and staffing is down to two part-time staff (0.8 and 0.5 FTEs). This comes, moreover, at a time of a substantial increase in demand (+56%) as a result of the economic and social crisis, with many reports of women unable to obtain places.

Traveller organisations point out the continued importance of measures for equality and against discrimination, and, granted that economic and social pressures can prompt reduced levels of tolerance, that they are more essential than ever.

2.2.7 Education

As of the 2011/2012 school year, 8,086 Traveller children attended primary school and 2,731 post-primary.³⁹ Both before and after the Traveller education strategy, Travellers benefitted from a range of measures to make good the historic deficits of investment in Traveller education. Austerity, though, has seen a substantial reduction in investment in Traveller education:

³⁹ Information supplied by Department of Education.

- ◆ The Visiting Teacher Service for Travellers (VTST), 40 posts, ceased in September 2011, with a saving of €2.4m;⁴⁰
- ◆ The system of Resource Teachers for Travellers (RTT), ceased on the same date. The complement of RTTs was 710 FTE (of which 488 primary, 222 secondary).⁴¹ To compensate for their withdrawal, 141 alleviation posts were made available (cost €8.4m), so the cut was 569. The savings were €34m;
- ◆ All 33 Senior Traveller Training Centres, with about a thousand students, were closed in June 2012, with present and following participants invited to participate in other educational programmes e.g. Back To Education Initiative (BTEI).
- ◆ Enhanced capitation funding for Traveller children was substantially cut; additional school transport support ceased in 2010.⁴²

Several of these measures were undertaken in the name of mainstreaming Travellers into the main education system. It had long been accepted that segregated Traveller education should be brought to an end, but that Travellers required additional support for them to participate on equal terms with the rest of the settled community. The evidence, though, is that the programme of mainstreaming was carried out aggressively after the breaking of the economic and social crisis, but the supports necessary to assist the process were not provided.

The need for additional support is recognized at departmental level. Indeed, the brief to the incoming minister described the key challenge as being to refocus services to provide greater support for Travellers.⁴³ The department admitted that:

It has not been possible to update the General Allocation Model (GAM) under which resource teachers are provided to schools to deal with the more common learning difficulties to include Traveller pupils (they were not counted in numbers of pupils when GAM allocations were made because of separate RTT scheme). Schools with significant numbers of Traveller students are concerned about insufficient resources to support such students given the loss of RTTs (pp9-10).

In other words, there was no system to capture the manner in which Traveller students were assisted after the change, but it went ahead anyway. The Minister for Children and Youth Affairs has stated that the National Education and Welfare Board, which has a responsibility in this area, does not record the number of Traveller children using its service.⁴⁴ The last statistics we have are that in 2010-11, 11% of students in the Schools Completion Programme were Travellers.⁴⁵ Asked about the participation of Travellers in education after the closure of the STTCs, the Minister of State at the Department of Education and Skills has stated that 'information on outcomes for Travellers is not available separately'.⁴⁶ There are statistics for Traveller participation in the Back to Education Allowance (733 in 2011) and Youthreach (578 in 2011), but that was *before* the STTCs closed.⁴⁷

When the proposal to close the STTCs progressed, Pavee Point argued that 'resources should be ring-fenced and invested in supports for Travellers to be integrated into mainstream schooling and vocational training. A failure to ring-fence funding would severely disadvantage Traveller participation in mainstream provision. This money should be ring-fenced and invested in education, training and employment initiatives

⁴⁰ These and subsequent figures on RTT scheme from Dail Eireann, *Debates*, 12th February 2013, 196-8.

⁴¹ These are the most recent figures supplied: Dail Eireann, *Debates*, 12th February 2013, 196-8. Figures for both the RTT and VTST scheme have varied over the past number of years, depending on date and source.

⁴² Details are provided in Department of Education & Skills: *Organization and current issues - a brief for the information of the Minister for Education and Skills*. Dublin, author, 2011.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 18; 9-10.

⁴⁴ Dail Eireann, *Debates*, 12th February 2013, 331.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ Dail Eireann, *Debates*, 12th February 2013, 198.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

that will result in positive outcomes for Travellers'.⁴⁸ There is no evidence that this happened. Moreover, BTEI guidelines reportedly specify that in order to receive an allowance on BTEI you must qualify for *Youthreach*, which makes it inaccessible to older Travellers.

Although the Department of Education and Skills undertook to monitor the consequences of the withdrawal of these services, no such information is yet available, nor is there information on other educational initiatives that help Traveller children, such as afterschools, pre-schools or youth clubs. Traveller organisations report that the loss of the visiting and resource teacher service means not only the loss of a dedicated services but that there is no system to alert schools to young Travellers in need of education: there are 'plenty of people who the [National Education and Welfare] Board does not know about'. There is no system in place to provide specific support for Travellers who face particular difficulties in school itself, such as suspensions, restricted days or limited subject choice. Home School Liaison Teachers are not available in non - DEIS schools.⁴⁹

The only certainty arising from this exercise is the considerable saving arising to the state from such a significant level of disinvestment in Traveller education. Savings from the elimination of the Visiting Teachers were €2.4m, for the resource teachers €34m and for the SSTCs, up to €26.8m. Table 8 maps the picture of investment in Traveller education over the period.

Table 10: Investment in Traveller education 2008-2013 €

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Pre-school ¹	468,920	761,252	627,887	253,179	95,143	0
Teaching resources ²	44,242,000	48,057,046	46,144,737	33,663,237	8,540,000	8,540,000
Funding resources ³	1,483,562	1,446,760	1,200,000	1,111,056	1,191,268	1,168,380
Junior education centres ⁴	636,640	633,000	665,920	734,400	459,600	339,600
Senior Traveller Training Centres	26,507,216	26,841,914	24,001,851	19,102,038	9,538,038	0
Parish Travelling People	198,000	198,000	192,000	192,000	192,000	192,000
School transport	2,000,000	1,800,000	1,200	23,477	17,035	0
Total	76,536,338	79,737,972	74,034,395	55,080,288	20,582,984	10,239,980

Source: Department of Education & Skills. Notes:

1 Pre-school and related transport costs. Now part of the mainstream Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE);

2 Resource Teachers and Visiting Teacher Scheme for Travellers

3 Enhanced capitation

4 Junior education centres: St Anthony's Athlone; St Joseph's, Milltown; St Thomas, Clonsaugh.

⁴⁸ Pavee Point: *Position paper on Senior Traveller Training Centres*. Dublin, author, 2006.

⁴⁹ Delivery Equality In Schools, a long-standing programme to focus additional educational supports on geographical areas of particular disadvantage.

Although many of the reductions were undertaken under the rubric of mainstreaming (for example, pre-school, school transport, resource teachers, visiting teachers, STTCs), the reduction in 'funding resources' was specifically attributed by the Department to 'savings required under the National Recovery Plan', itemizing a specific example of the contribution of the Traveller community to national recovery.⁵⁰ Overall, the reduction in investment in Traveller education is down from €76.5m to €10.2m, the precise proportion being -86.6%.

Traveller organisations report:

- ◆ An increase in truancy, mainly by boys. There is no follow-up for truancy reports at either primary or secondary level;
- ◆ Community development projects have been asked to help organize transport to get Traveller children to school, replacing the former help with transport. Some CDPs have withdrawn education support for adults in order to concentrate on helping children with homework;
- ◆ There is no longer assistance for parents in helping their children choose subjects or to assist with their homework;
- ◆ In the absence of resource or visiting teachers, schools have nowhere to refer Traveller children who have behavioural issues, except *Youthreach*, if there is a project nearby. *Youthreach* is the standard default position and is designed for children at risk. Traveller children may be sent there even if the risk level is quite low, when fundamentally the problem should be solved by the school in the school. But if not, they may be expelled. There is a growing practice of Traveller children being sent home and put on a part-time week, with no reason given, but with a warning that the alternative is an expulsion. Traveller children are often encouraged to stay at home during transition year.
- ◆ *Youthreach* services are, in any case, over-subscribed. One youth project reported: '15 Travellers here go to *Youthreach*, but the demand is actually twice that level'.

The same is the case with the closure of the Senior Traveller Training Colleges. When Travellers were recommended to participate in Back To Education Initiatives (BTEI) instead, educational provision moved from a supply to a demand model, dependent on Traveller organisations being present and successfully attracting funding from the VECs. In 2012, the training allowances for participation in BTEI were withdrawn. We do not know the number of Travellers on BTEI subsequent to the closure of STTCs; nor the number of BTEI initiatives for Travellers, though there are reports of difficulties that they experience in attracting VEC money. Funding for other educational initiatives is scarce and one case was reported of an afterschool being unsuccessful in obtaining funding from the School Completion Programme, but thankfully the Society of St Vincent de Paul agreed to fund it.

The closure of the STTCs has left a legacy of abandonment: 'The teachers were all settled people and they simply transferred into the school system: but we were left with nothing'. Not only that, but in some cases the buildings were simply 'abandoned for the grass to grow through them, left for vandals' or scheduled for demolition. Only one is known to have been returned to the education system, but none of the premises were transferred to the Traveller community. This capital investment in education was largely lost. The Department of Education and Skills does not even keep a listing or information on what happened to the centres.⁵¹

⁵⁰ Department of Education and Skills: Explanatory note to table provided.

⁵¹ Dail Eireann, *Debates*, 12th February 2013, 196-8.

The withdrawal of the extra school transport assistance particularly affects Travellers, for the existing mainstream programme applies only to children attending their nearest school. Travellers often find it difficult to enroll in their nearest school, due to discrimination and as a result must travel to a more distant school, but in a Kafkaesque twist, they become ineligible for transport as a result.

'Mainstreaming' is a current, leading edge theory in public administration where exponents are known to seek successful example of good practice: this example is a candidate case study of the converse.

2.3 Conclusions

This chapter has detailed the effects of austerity on the Traveller community, its infrastructure, funding streams and projects. We can now construct a table (11) with the headline figures, as follows. It is divided into those programmes used directly or exclusively by Travellers (11A) and a smaller number of other programmes used by Travellers or important to them (11B). Note that these are the figures for *allocations*, not *spend*, which may be substantially less.

Table 11: Effects of austerity on Travellers, headline figures.

11A: Programmes and funding lines for Travellers 2008-2013

Interagency activities	-100%
Traveller education	-86.6%
Traveller accommodation	-85%
Equality	-76.3%
National Traveller organisations	-63.6%
FAS Special Initiative for Travellers	-50%
National Traveller Partnership	-32.1%
Traveller SPY youth projects	-29.8%
Health	-5.4%

11B: Programmes and funding lines of importance to Travellers

Equality and rights agencies	-69%
LCDP	-42.3%
Initiatives against drugs	-32.5%

The only programme to stand out against these reduction is the Traveller social enterprise projects funded in the Community Services Programme which rose +104.9% and NTMABS, which rose +31.9%. Even though there may have been some special circumstances, it shows that it is possible to protect some Traveller programmes.

As noted earlier, these are allocations figures in a field where spend has often trailed far behind. The following table, table 12, sets down the level of spend and, conversely underspent:

Table 12: Level of spend and underspend, 2008-2012

	<u>Spent</u>	<u>Underspend</u>
Health	82%	18%
Equality	72%	28%
Accommodation	64%	36%
FAS Special Initiative for Travellers	60%	40%

These figures tell an egregious story of an extraordinary level of disinvestment by the Irish state in the Traveller community. These figures must be seen in the context of the total fall of government spending, -4.3% during this period. The two most striking reductions are those of education, down -86% and accommodation, down -85%. Granted what is known of the continued adversity which Travellers face in their housing conditions and granted the disparity of educational achievement between the Traveller and the settled community, these decisions by government are difficult to understand. Of the 'big three' of health, education and housing, the health reductions have been least, but this must be seen in the context of an average underspend of 28% and the smaller size of the budget concerned. A particular point to note is that interagency activities, heralded as essential only a few years ago, is zeroed. If we turn to the specific area of community development, the cuts here have been severe. Funding for national Traveller organisations is down -63.6%, funding for community-based anti-drugs initiatives is down - 32.5%, funding for Traveller community development projects is down - 32.1%, youth projects -29.8% and the Local and Community Development Programme, which has Travellers as a target group, - 42.3%. Finally, if we look at the national institutions set up to protect and support, among others, Travellers, their budget has been cut -69%.

This is a striking picture. One can think of no other section of the community which has suffered such a high level of disinvestment, compounded by the failure of the state to spend even the limited resources that are available.

3 Ways forward for the Traveller community

This chapter returns to the theme of chapter 1 to sketch the current state of community development in the Traveller community (3.1), and then looks at its future (3.2), especially in the light of austerity reported in chapter 2. Some concluding comments are made (3.3). Pen portraits of a number of Traveller advocates are included in this chapter to show the evolution of community development through the words of some of its participants.

3.1 Community development now

To return to the theme of chapter 1, the evolution of community development in the Traveller community, significant progress has now been made. The process of community development dates back, as we saw earlier, to the 1980s, so is now almost thirty years old. There have been important achievements.

First, there the replacement of the assimilationist, integrationist model by one based on Traveller self-determination; cultural identity and traditions; and rights. Had the 1963 report of the Commission on Itinerancy been implemented, that tradition would have disappeared and been irretrievably lost. Travellers have achieved a level of recognition as a distinct group, with dedicated policies for Travellers at national level and in distinct fields, such as health, education and accommodation, even a volume of the census. There is one step, though, which the Irish state has yet to take, which is recognition of the Traveller community as a minority ethnic group, which would bring Ireland into line with international standards and set responsibilities on the state to vindicate its rights.

Second, related to this, the community development process has enabled the Traveller community to develop its own organisations and leadership. Right into the 1980s, most bodies concerned with Travellers were led and run by settled people, sometimes exclusively so. The educational work of Traveller community development groups has provided the environment in which Travellers have developed their own skills in leadership, management, representation and communications, especially evident in the projects of the Community Development Programme. Not only that, but they have done so with confidence and a pride in their community: as one informant put it: 'saying "I am a Traveller..." requires a lot of confidence'. Travellers and people from a Traveller background have now run for election, with a small number elected to local authorities and the Oireachtas. Community development replaced the old settlement committees with places where Travellers may reflect together (Minceirs Whidden); and also partnerships between Travellers and settled people on projects and programmes. There is now an infrastructure of Traveller organisations: national (e.g. Pavee Point, Irish Traveller Movement and National Traveller Women's Forum), and local organisations throughout the country. This means that the Traveller community can be consulted at all levels and play an active part in all the issues and policies which affect them.

Third, the community development process has built up, since the 1990s, a framework of policies and structures to guide the relationship between the state and the Traveller community. As seen in chapter 1, the policies cross a range from health to education to accommodation, while the structures run from local to national level, focussing on such key areas as health and education. The introduction of the Equal Status Act from 2000 was a milestone, because it formally prohibited discrimination because of membership of the Traveller community. There is a huge challenge ahead, though, to make these policies, structures and law work effectively. Although the theory and practice implementation is a live one in Irish public administration, its application in this field appears to be especially weak.

Fourth, there have been concrete gains as a result of the investment in health, education and accommodation. The number of Travellers living involuntarily on unauthorized sites, where living conditions were traditionally the worst, has fallen over the years. The quality of some accommodation, more recently as a result of refurbishment, has improved. Preventative health measures (e.g. vaccination, health screening for cancer) have begun. There have been specific gains as a result of education, gains which stem from the confidence given people by community development. Travellers more and more go through the whole education system: there is now 100% completion at primary level and the next challenge is to achieve this at secondary level. Travellers increasingly attend university and recently the first qualified as medical doctors and as lawyers. The first have joined An Garda Síochána. Others are youth workers. Travellers have excelled in sport, such as the Olympics.

All these are outcomes of the changes begun in the 1980s by community development groups working with Travellers, or as one commentator pointed out, 'these changes did not just happen'.

3.2 The future

The manner in which austerity has been applied to the Traveller community (chapter 2) makes consideration of the future of community development work in this field a sobering exercise. At a time of a gentle reduction of overall government current spending of -4.3% in the past five years, Traveller community development has seen its funding fall in a band from 29% to 63%, while in two of the areas most important to the Traveller community, education and housing, funding is down -86% and -85%. It is very difficult to find commitments by the government to 'social inclusion' and 'protecting the vulnerable' credible or trustworthy in the light of these facts.

Both this situation and the unmet needs highlighted earlier suggest a substantial agenda for community development with the Traveller community:

- ◆ The need to protect, preserve and extend the gains made by community development over the past thirty years, principally its model of development, the infrastructure of Traveller organisations that has built up and the leadership that has developed. It suggests the importance of training a new, younger generation in leadership that will enable the community to cope with the hardships inflicted by austerity, respond to them and emerge from them;
- ◆ The need to challenge and reverse the effects of the decisions taken by government over 2008-2013, which have disproportionately affected the Traveller community. Chapter 2 shows the incidence of the damage, which has been most acute in the areas of education and accommodation. In particular, it is important to challenge those areas from where the state has retreated, such as anti-racism and inter-culturalism and the prevention of discrimination. The state continues to take decisions without consulting Travellers, with Travellers unrepresented on high-level groups at national level and local level. This is contrary to *European principles of Roma inclusion* which enunciate the principle, paraphrased here, of 'no decisions on Travellers without the involvement of Travellers'.⁵²
- ◆ The importance of making the strategies and the structures developed over the past decade work effectively. This is something which the Traveller community cannot do on its own, but must be achieved with those with a sense of political responsibility in the country's political leadership. In particular, there is a need to make real progress on:

⁵² European Commission: *The 10 common basic principles on Roma inclusion*. Brussels, author.

- Traveller health, where statistics of difference remain as wide as ever; Accommodation, where many Travellers continue to live in conditions of hardship and where the relocation of Traveller families to private rented accommodation may be a subtle form of assimilation
- Education, where there is a need to reinvest, in mainstream education, the resources taken away from Travellers over 2008-2013, with proper tracking, monitoring and evaluation systems in place
- Labour market and employment issues, through a combination of the Traveller economy and investment in intensive activation
- The need to address key political issues, notably:
- Recognition of the Traveller community as a minority ethnic group, something which has been long delayed
- Amendment of the equal status legislation so as to make it a truly effective instrument against discrimination
- Development of a new Action Plan Against Racism
- Interculturalism, especially in schools which are slow to address issues of diversity and discrimination

A specific emerging issue is what is called the alignment process, local authorities are expected to assume greater responsibilities for local development, *Putting people first*.⁵³ This presents a serious challenge for the Traveller community, for it suggests that local and community development work be universally put under the general supervision of the local authorities.

This is doubly problematical, first because of the track record of local authorities in working with Travellers. While some local authorities have made genuine efforts to work with the Traveller community, this is not universally the case. Local authorities are responsible for meeting the accommodation needs of Travellers, but most have proved to be remarkably slow in implementing Traveller Accommodation Programmes, with allocated budgets unspent. Chapter 2 identified the problem of the underspending of accommodation, where money available was not actually drawn down. A specific example is Fingal, which identified the need to provide 138 units under the 2005-8 programme, but provided only 54 (39% of the total). The unprovided units were carried over into the 2008-2013 programme, which required 184 units. By 2012, only 42 had been provided, 23% of the total.⁵⁴ The pace of progress by Dublin City Council in 2012 in progressing long-awaited accommodation programmes was so slow that in 2012 only €50,000 was allocated.⁵⁵ One urban project report that its local authority convened the Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee only once in 2012, but had to adjourn because it was inquorate due to lack of attendance by councillors. These are not just a few isolated cases, for the Centre for Housing Research reported that of 40 sites studied, 33 were close to environmental hazards, such as pylons, dumps or roads.⁵⁶ The All Ireland Traveller Health Study found a continuing failure to provide minimum facilities for Travellers, with 5.2% without access to water and 81% reporting lack of play areas on sites.⁵⁷ As one

⁵³ Government of Ireland: *Putting people first - action programme for effective local government*. Dublin, The Stationery Office, 2012.

⁵⁴ Colhoun, Elizabeth: *An overview of housing policy for Travellers in Ireland*. Galway, NUI Galway, BA thesis, 2012.

⁵⁵ See, for example, Dail Eireann, *Debates*, 27th March 2012, 645-7.

⁵⁶ Coates, Dermot; Kane, Fiona; & Treadwell Shine, Kasey: *Traveller accommodation in Ireland - review of policy and practice*. Dublin, Centre for Housing Research, 2008.

⁵⁷ University College Dublin: *All Ireland Traveller Health Study*. Dublin, author, 2010.

Traveller representative put it, ‘the council has failed to provide Traveller accommodation for thirty years, which is more than one Traveller generation’.

Second, as one Traveller project put it, is that ‘our advocacy role has necessarily brought us into direct confrontation with the local authorities’. If local and community development work were to be subsumed by the local authorities, such dissent would not be permitted and an essential principle of community development would be lost.

Putting people first contended that local authorities had engaged with agencies and individuals to achieve good outcomes in such areas as initiatives for Travellers. Self-praise, though, is no praise and would be disputed by Travellers on grounds of their record on consultation, accommodation and environmental health. Nevertheless, granted that the government is intent on proceeding with the alignment process, several measures are necessary to ensure that the well-established tradition and record of community development work be protected and enhanced.⁵⁸ These are:

- ◆ Traveller organisations to continue to be funded as independent and autonomous organisations even if funding has to come through local authorities. They should not be simply delivery agents for existing local authority services;
- ◆ Travellers should continue to be identified as a target group for inclusion in local and community development. Resources should be earmarked for Traveller programmes, activities and services, with monitoring and evaluation systems designed to track the participation of Travellers therein;
- ◆ Ring-fencing the continued work of the national Traveller organisations and the National Traveller Partnership with its community development projects enabled to continue in their current role;
- ◆ Participation of Travellers on the planned Social Economic Committees that will guide local and community development.

If alignment is to proceed, it is vital to consult with civil society organisations in general and in the case here, with Traveller organisations in particular. The group overseeing the alignment process does not have community sector representation. The National Traveller Roma Integration Strategy emphasized how important it was that Traveller organisations ‘actively participate in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies’ (principle 9).

Keeping Travellers marginalised and forcing them to live in poverty is not in the interests of either Travellers or wider Irish society. It is in the interest of the state that sustainable Traveller communities are supported in an inclusive and intercultural society which requires prioritization of their needs and investment in Traveller services.

⁵⁸ For a detailed exposition of some of the issues discussed here, see National Traveller Partnership: *Community development with Travellers - Traveller CDPs and alignment*. Dublin, author, 2012.

3.3 Conclusions

This research has tracked the emergence, development and evolution of community development work with the Traveller community from the 1980s. Community development introduced a new, enlightened model of development, one which challenged a model of assimilation, replacing it with one of respect, self-determination, rights and the valuing of Traveller culture and traditions. It built the first generation of national Traveller leadership, with an infrastructure of national and local organisations. Community development projects in particular explored the concept and developed the practice of services designed, delivered and managed by Travellers. The engagement with the state made on foot of this process resulted in a range of national strategies (e.g. Task Force, 1995), a range of sectoral strategies (e.g. health, education, accommodation, all outlined in table 1) and implementation bodies to ensure that they were put into operation. The community development process was also important in the less tangible but nonetheless real empowering of Travellers to speak out for themselves with the confidence to engage with the state and its institutions. Progress began to be made, albeit far too slowly. The worst site conditions were reduced, preventative health measures began, Travellers began to enter second-level education in large numbers.

The economic and social crisis which broke in 2008 has, sadly, seen an avoidable reversal of many of the gains made in the 1990s and 2000s. Despite numerous and eloquent commitments to protect vulnerable groups, Travellers have suffered severely from specific cuts that have far outrun the overall reduction of government spending in the order of -4.3%. Chapter 2 outlined how the cuts have affected community development, social welfare, accommodation, labour market services, equality and education. Only two areas appear to have been spared, the social economy programme and NTMABS, but the fact that they were indicates what could have been done elsewhere. There is initial feedback on the practical consequences for Travellers in the form of poverty, reduced educational opportunities and continuing hardship in accommodation conditions. The consequences, though, of state disinvestment in Traveller education may take longer to notice, but could be most destructive.

The concluding comments of this chapter, chapter 3, outline the concrete achievements of community development in leadership, organization, self-confidence, infrastructure, models of work, policies, structures and concrete improvements in economic and social conditions. It is important that these achievements be consolidated and protected, whilst going on to challenge the decisions made by government in the past five years and addressing, in partnership with settled people, the big issues of accommodation, health, education and the economy. There remains a substantial political agenda in the form of the recognition of Travellers as a minority ethnic group; the need to amend equal status legislation to make it an effective and dissuasive instrument against discrimination; and the need to reinstate anti-racism and inter-culturalism on the national agenda. The alignment proposals set down in *Putting people first* represent a significant threat to progress in community development, but proposals have been put forward which would protect existing services, programmes, projects and advocacy work. Finally, the stories of four Traveller advocates illustrate the progress, the disappointments and the hopes arising from community development work over the past thirty years.

Rosaleen McDonagh

Rosaleen McDonagh was the fourth eldest in a family of twenty and spent her early childhood looking after her younger brothers and sisters, but over time, she rebelled against having less freedom as a girl child than boys and usually got to do the same thing as her brothers. Because she had cerebral palsy, at the age of four she was sent to a residential school, which was lonely and difficult. Despite lack of money and minding other children, her parents always made the effort to travel from Sligo to Dublin to visit her. Although her parents strongly valued their Traveller identity, at school people poked fun at it, which even took the form of physical violence: 'that was when my political resistance began'. She remembers her contradictory emotions of watching a television interview with activist Nan Joyce: she was goaded and bullied for days, but, she says, Nan's appearance 'made sense of my life: she wasn't filled with shame, or shyness, the way I was. Clever and charismatic, she viewed Traveller ethnicity as something positive that wasn't at odds with Irish identity'. For Rosaleen, 'the mere fact of ethnicity makes you political'.



Rosaleen left special school at 18 with no formal qualifications and low expectations of herself - so she went to study for a primary degree and then a Master's degree. She went to work for Pavee Point as coordinator of the violence against women programme. 'This was the making of me' and made her a Traveller feminist, she said. She met Traveller women who were separated or divorced and became friends with Traveller women who didn't marry or have children, quite contrary to the stereotype and she heard the stories of lesbian and gay Travellers, 'the stigma and shame of internalized oppression is similar for Travellers with a disability. The moment I first went to a Traveller meeting was when I felt free within myself'. Women's rights were part of community development too and organizations such as Pavee Point created safe spaces where issues such as domestic violence, feuding and drug abuse could be discussed.

Rosaleen McDonagh has followed the effects of austerity: the cuts in employment schemes, education, funding for organisations to the point that some disappear and individual poverty. The past five years, she feels, has enabled a more covert and harsher racism to emerge, one that is harder to challenge and a more censorious attitude to those deemed to be different. Where once there was a rhetoric about equality, officials have become concerned about what and how much public resources go into Traveller organisations, which creates a paranoid and competitive environment for voluntary organisations. They say 'we have no more resources', but we have ended up with cuts disproportionate to others. Equality has come to be seen as a luxury. In the name of mainstreaming, which can be fantastic for some individuals, specific supports for Travellers have disappeared. *Mainstreaming without equality measures and targets, she argues, is divisive.* Her hope is that Ireland will recognize Travellers as a minority ethnic group and that this will 'redress the balance by ensuring Traveller organisations and infrastructure are well resourced to do vital advocacy work'.

Chrissie O'Sullivan

Chrissie O'Sullivan's grandfather was a wagon-maker and craftsman from Cork, but lived for a short time in Meath. She was reared in Avila Park, Finglas, in Dublin but her family moved to Cork, when she was thirteen. Because there was no secondary school which Travellers attended, she left school the next year. She tried to get into a Senior Traveller Training Centre, but was turned away as too young and had to come back later. The halting site where they lived in Cork was due to be replaced by a main road, so there was no investment in it. The only advantages were that it was a big open space and near the dump, which was good for recycling, but it was, she said, 'deplorable, a hovel, full of rats and flies'.



Conditions were so bad that they protested many times and as a single girl she went along with the protests. She said she did not fully realize the full implications of her situation and these conditions until she became a mother at 18 and had to care for someone else. Being a mother politicized her, because the hospital kept Travellers separately from other mothers, even putting them into private rooms to do so, finding herself alone in a room at night for the first time in her life. She tackled the hospital about the discrimination, but it was strenuously denied. Then after hospital, because of the conditions on the site, her first child was constantly sick with respiratory and gastric trouble. She got work as a pre-school assistant on a bus that drove around the sites. The primary school also collected children from all over the city passing plenty of other schools on the way so as to reach a Traveller-only school which at best gave its children a poor rate of literacy.

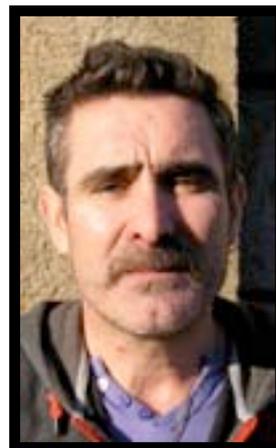
Chrissie O'Sullivan became a regional development worker for the Irish Traveller Movement in Cork in 1990. There was no lack of issues for it to address. Her site was eventually moved, the original nice horseshoe design replaced by homes sandwiched between two roads, 'like an airstrip'. Traveller children could not get into secondary schools, for 'fear of being inundated', she was told. When she and her colleagues protested, charity welfare vouchers were withdrawn. 'There had to be a better way of organizing', she felt, so with her colleagues she organized a study *Making Travellers visible*, which helped Travellers to work out their priorities for change and led to the Traveller Visibility Group. Chrissie herself enlisted in University College Cork for social studies and got her degree there. She is gratified that college social work and community work courses are last beginning to include social policy for Travellers on the curriculum, but asks: 'Are they exam questions? If you are a doctor, do you learn about Traveller health? These areas still have a long way to go'.

Armed with this information and new confidence, the Traveller Visibility Group began working for change. Some of the best progress was made in health, where they now train the staff of the maternity unit. 'The Traveller health strategy legitimized the work and made an open door into the health services', she said. In education, completing second level is now seen as the desirable norm and parents are better able to help their children in homework. But, she says, education cuts have twice the impact for Travellers, where education is so fragile. The equality legislation has proved disappointing: 'only a year ago, a Traveller party was "cancelled" by the pub at the last moment and everyone turned away. The guards took the side of the publican and the case was dismissed on a technicality'. There is still discrimination getting into second schools, where a previous 'family connection' is required, discrimination now legalized by the courts. Even if they do get in, they still hear themselves being called 'knackers', with little or no recourse, while on television 'we are saturated with having to put up with cringe TV like the *Gypsy wedding* series'.

Martin Collins

Martin Collins was born in Manchester, but his parents returned to Dublin with him in 1967 when they were one of the first extended families to live in the Avila Park scheme in Finglas, where he has resided ever since. The scheme of tigeens was seen as a stepping stone to conventional housing, which was very much the integrationist model of the time.

His mother, who had been to mainstream education for two years, chose to send him and his younger brother Michael to the 250-student St Kevin's national school rather than to the Traveller-only prefab school around the corner. The Traveller-only primary schools taught all ages together and most had the reputation of sending their students back out into the world quite unable to read or write. On the other hand, as the only Travellers in St Kevin's, being a Traveller 'made you quite self-conscious, aware of difference and out of my comfort zone', he recalled. There was some name-calling and bullying and he and his brother often had to run home to avoid trouble from what was 'a very different world'.



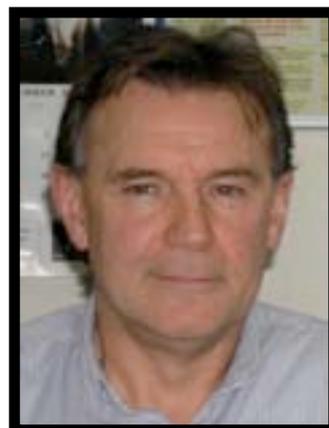
Martin left school at 13, as did all Travellers then, to work with his father 'on the markets', selling scrap, tools and household items, making a living from items left at the dump - 'what was called "scavenging" then but is now more fashionable as "recycling"'. His introduction to community development came in 1985 when one day out playing football he was invited by the late John O'Connell and Ronnie Fay to join an education course run in the Little Flower project in Meath St., Dublin. John O'Connell had worked as a missionary and was part of a new, exciting, world-wide model of development based on people's self-determination. 'We had expected woodwork for the boys and sewing for the girls', he remembered, 'but we were presented with a flipchart, markers and instead did social analysis, personal development, leadership, community development and cultural rights'. There were 24 Travellers on the first course which later attracted funding from AnCo as a Teamwork project. There, they learned how to run events like discos (Travellers could not get into other discos) and summer projects. 'At first, there was panic when we were told we had to learn to do these things ourselves, but we did'. In 1990, Martin Collins became a youth worker under funding provided by Comhairle le Leas Oige, running activities in the sites around north and north-west Dublin. In 2002 Martin was appointed to the first Irish Human Rights Commission.

Eventually, Martin Collins became Co-Director of Pavee Point, originally the Dublin Travellers Education and Development Group (DTEDG) in the 1980s. This organisation has run a series of programmes and projects with Travellers, from health to education and has taken an active role in research and policy-making. Martin described the DTEDG as 'a pioneering model' that emphasized the importance of Traveller culture and ethnicity and named racism as the core issue to be addressed if Travellers were to achieve their human rights, but was not well received at first. But all Traveller groups now have come around to the rights-based approach: 'at an individual level, there are still some who are nervous about the Traveller identity and hide it, but young and old are increasingly confident and want to do something about their situation'. He is heartened by the progress made by Travellers in education, but disappointed with the pace of the implementation of policies. Ultimately, he says, 'we are in an unequal power relationship. All we can do is analyse, research and try to persuade'. He is taken aback by what has happened in recent years with the austerity cuts: 'The government says everyone has to suffer, but they've taken away our education funding, the welfare cuts have demoralized everyone and there is little hope of an economic improvement'.

Thomas McCann

Thomas McCann grew up in the first Traveller site at Labre Park, Ballyfermot in the 1960s. He attended, like almost everyone else he knew, an all-Traveller school, which was 'not bad, but I didn't learn much'.

Like everyone else, he left at 13 to join his father in trading for scrap and horses. There he might have continued, but what changed things was the Tallaght by-pass. Vigilantes decided to keep Travellers out of the area: 'big men, heavies, set up road blocks. Trailers were burned. The police did nothing'. At a certain stage, they got tired of being refused getting on buses and denied service in pubs. 'Thirteen of us were refused in a pub, so we sat down and we were all arrested. We spent the weekend in the Bridewell. A funny feature of these events was that whenever Travellers were discriminated against and complained, we were always the people who were arrested. When we once organised a protest, the police turned out in full riot gear'.



Thomas McCann was involved in Minceir Misli (chapter 1) and then the courses run by the Dublin Travellers Education and Development Group (DTEDG). 'Its approach', Thomas recalls, 'tallied much more with my experience. The DTEDG spoke of racism, ethnicity and human rights, which fitted better than the model of charity and social welfare'. So he enlisted on a community work course at what is now the National University of Ireland, Maynooth. He had no money, but kind missionaries gave him accommodation there and when he finished, he became a youth and community worker for the DTEDG. With an amazing sense of timing, Thomas then took time out to travel to Eastern Europe (Hungary) in 1989, the year of revolutions, on to China by train on a \$29 fare and then to Hong Kong where he worked in a travel agency and in the film industry.

Returning to Ireland, Thomas started a Business, Economic and Social Studies course in Dublin University (Trinity College), a course he loved, with 'great lectures' and learning statistics. He moved on to work for the Irish Traveller Movement (ITM) for a long spell. During his time there (1993-2005) it grew from just a few groups to more than 80 and became the national representative organisation for Travellers. He then began to pursue an interest in counselling, starting with a foundational course at the Tivoli Institute and finished a Master's degree in clinical supervision at Dublin University (Trinity College). This led to the founding of the Traveller Counselling Service, starting with a board and a small social entrepreneurs grant. Thomas had a general interest in culturally inclusive counselling but was convinced of the need for a service for Travellers, one with which they could identify and trust. He can speak at length of the problems of mental well-being in the Traveller community, the shocking level of suicide, the pressures of being a minority trying to cope with adversity and hardship. The service is now well established and expanding. Thomas plans to go on to study for a doctorate. Looking at the past five years, he points to the achievements of community development as a means of organising and mobilizing people to create change, but is disappointed with 'policies and structures not implemented and the law going backward. The state may concede the policies and structures, but lacks the resolve to implement them. But a fully engaged Traveller community can make that happen'.

'Travelling with Austerity'

Impacts of Cuts on Travellers, Traveller Projects and Services 2013 Report

Pavee Point is concerned about the impact of the recession and austerity on the work with Travellers and Traveller organisations in Ireland with successive budgetary cuts over the past few years. The Traveller sector has experienced significant losses in terms of redundancies, cuts in services and closure of initiatives/projects. This research, undertaken by Brian Harvey, maps the cumulative impact of cuts since 2008 and paints a disturbing picture illustrating how Travellers, Traveller Projects and Travellers Services have been cut disproportionately during this period of Austerity:

“These figures tell an egregious story of an extraordinary level of disinvestment by the Irish state in the Traveller community. These figures must be seen in the context of the total fall of government spending, -4.3% during this period. The two most striking reductions are those of education, down 86% and accommodation, down 85%. Granted what is known of the continued adversity which Travellers face in their housing conditions and granted the disparity of educational achievement between the Traveller and the settled community, these decisions by government are difficult to understand.

This is a striking picture. One can think of no other section of the community which has suffered such a high level of disinvestment, compounded by the failure of the state to spend even the limited resources that are available.

It is very difficult to find commitments by the government to ‘social inclusion’ and ‘protecting the vulnerable’ credible or trustworthy in the light of these facts.”



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