



# PAVEE POINT

## TRAVELLER AND ROMA CENTRE

Pavee Point Traveller and Roma Centre

**Feedback on “PSI Draft Corporate Strategy”**

July 2024

Pavee Point Traveller and Roma Centre (‘Pavee Point’) is a national non-governmental organisation committed to the attainment of human rights for Travellers and Roma. The organisation comprises Travellers, Roma and members of the majority population working in partnership to address the needs of Travellers and Roma, who as minority ethnic groups experience racism, discrimination, exclusion, and marginalisation.

For further information, please contact:

Rebecca Gorman ([Rebecca.gorman@pavee.ie](mailto:Rebecca.gorman@pavee.ie))

Co-Directors: Martin Collins & Lynsey Kavanagh ([lynsey.kavanagh@pavee.ie](mailto:lynsey.kavanagh@pavee.ie);  
[martin.collins@pavee.ie](mailto:martin.collins@pavee.ie))

T: 01-878-0255

Pavee Point Traveller and Roma Centre welcomes the opportunity to provide feedback on the PSI Draft Corporate Strategy 2025-2028.

### **Key recommendations:**

1. Implementation of Section 42, IHREC Act 2014 (Public Sector Duty), specifically to:
  - Assess - set out in its strategic plan an assessment of Traveller human rights and equality issues it believes to be relevant to the functions and purpose of the body;
  - Address - set out in its strategic plan the policies, plans and actions in place or proposed to be put in place to address those issues;
  - Report - report on developments and achievements in its annual report, including a specific focus on Traveller health
2. Ensure equality and anti-racism approaches are embedded in the sector, via anti-racism training and human rights-based impact assessments across all business areas.
3. Ensure pharmacies link in with local Traveller and Roma organisations and Primary Healthcare for Travellers Projects to deliver tailored and targeted approaches to healthcare access for these marginalised groups, in order to address challenges such as limited health literacy and discrimination in health services.
4. Undertake a human-rights based impact assessment to process changes relating to the digital transformation of pharmacy care and removal of in-person community supports.

### **Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty**

The Public Sector Duty states that a public body is required to set out in its strategic/corporate plan an assessment of the equality and human rights issues relevant to its purpose and functions, in a manner that is accessible to the public. This assessment is not present in the Corporate Strategy and should be included. Under objective 3 of the draft Plan, the action “Set out the policies, plans, and actions to address the human rights and equality issues relevant to our functions and purpose, as required under Section 42 of the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014” is insufficient to meet this requirement in our view.

There are over 36,000 Irish Travellers in Ireland, representing less than 1% of the nation’s population and an estimated 16,049 Roma, many of whom live in poverty due to lack of access to work and restrictive social welfare measures. As minority ethnic groups, Travellers and Roma experience persistent racism and discrimination on the basis of ethnicity, gender and other grounds. As a result, Travellers and Roma are among the most marginalised and excluded individuals and groups in Ireland. Local pharmacies are key supports for Travellers and Roma who do not have access to a GP, and therefore should be considered as key stakeholders in the provision of pharmacy care in the community. The overall national context of GP shortage has an impact on Traveller and Roma access to primary care; with some GPs unable to take on additional patients, including medical card holders- forcing many Travellers and Roma to forgo medical care as paying privately is not

an option. Additional challenges including racism and discrimination within health services. For example, according to the All Ireland Traveller Health Study:

- Only 41% of Travellers had complete trust in health professionals, compared to 82% in the general population
- 53% of Travellers “worried about experiencing unfair treatment”
- Over 40% of Travellers had a concern that they were not always treated with respect and dignity
- Over 50% of Travellers had concerns of the quality of care they received when they engaged with services
- 7 out of 10 health professionals agreed anti-Traveller racism & discrimination existed in health services, resulting in substandard treatment of Traveller patients

Further for many Roma, access to mainstream health services, including GPs are not a reality, with the National Roma Needs Assessment reporting that 50% of Roma do not have access to medical cards and GP care.

The pharmacy sector has a key role to play in providing accessible healthcare to marginalised groups, including minority ethnic groups; actions such as anti-racism training for staff, anti-racism action plans and human rights-based impact assessments, as part of the fulfillment of the Public Sector Duty, should be a priority in the PSI’s approach to the regulation of the sector.

### **Health Literacy and Digitalisation in healthcare**

Literacy, in health and in digital literacy, is a key issue that must be considered in the roll out of digital transformation in the pharmacy sector. Pharmacies are accessible, brick and mortar locations for people to access care in their community, with pharmacists available to provide relevant information to customers with limited literacy skills and improve comprehension in prescription adherence and engaging in supports available, such as availing of the drugs payment scheme and medical card. According to the All Ireland Traveller Health Study, half of Travellers reported poor functional literacy, that is comprehension of the written instructions provided with prescription medicines, constituting a significant health concern.<sup>1</sup> There is a need to ensure innovative and targeted measures from the pharmacy sector in partnership with Pavee Point and other Traveller organisations to ensure Travellers are informed and are able to adhere to prescriptions from healthcare professionals.

The national Traveller healthcare infrastructure is supported by Traveller organisations and Primary Healthcare for Travellers Projects (PHCTPs) across the country. The majority of Travellers access health information via the Traveller Primary Healthcare Community Workers in these Projects who provide essential health information in culturally appropriate and accessible methods. The pharmacy sector should be encouraged to engage with these PHCTPs and Traveller organisations at a local level, in order to ensure a partnership approach is used to provide culturally appropriate healthcare to Travellers in the area.

The digitalisation of pharmacies, from ordering prescriptions online to eventually removing physical in-store support, will leave many groups, including Travellers and Roma, behind. In

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<sup>1</sup> All Ireland Traveller Health Study, 2010.

particular older Travellers and those with limited digital literacy will experience further health inequalities. In person support and information in many formats is required and should be strengthened and invested in as a key enabler in reducing health inequalities in Ireland. If digitalisation is considered in the sector, a human-rights based impact assessment should be undertaken to ensure health inequalities are not further exacerbated by these changes.