

Trav Times



**Traveller
Pride 2022**

**Maynooth
Graduation**

Older Travellers Big Day Out

**NW Roma
Health
Strategy**

**How
To Look After
Your **Mental**
Health**

Focus on Education

Donegal Travellers Lead The Way

DEAR FRIENDS

Welcome to the December bumper issue of TRAV TIMES, in which we look back on another year for the Donegal Travellers Project. DTP continues to address the many issues and challenges experienced by Travellers and Roma in Donegal. This Trav Times edition will show you some of the ways we do that.

2022 has seen the organisation taking on additional staff in key roles and we are proud that our organisation is now being run almost entirely by Travellers and that Travellers from Co Donegal are representing themselves and the DTP at a local and national level.

We focus on Traveller Mental Health and Education, two key areas of work for us. We reveal important research into Traveller men's mental health which will inform future health initiatives and we highlight ways in which we all can look after our own mental health. We also introduce our new Traveller Women's Awareness work which we believe will have a positive impact.

In Education, we now have two dedicated Development workers and we received

significant funding to expand our team next year so we can ensure that all Traveller and Roma children are getting equal access to education at all levels. We visit two great DTP initiatives, St Gabriel's Intercultural Preschool and the DTP Homework club and we celebrate the achievements of our own staff members and other members of the Traveller community who graduated from Maynooth University.

Our Roma support team has also grown and we appointed a regional Roma Health Coordinator to work alongside the team to carry out a health focused needs analysis of the Roma community in the North West.

As always Traveller Pride is a huge occasion for the community to celebrate its culture. We feature pictures from this year's Traveller Pride event which included the opening of the powerful Still Here Still Proud photographic exhibition.

There is a picture spread from a memorable day out for our Older Persons and another picture spread featuring your special occasions.

We are proud of the work we have done and we are mindful of the challenges that still lie ahead for the DTP as we continue to promote equal opportunities and outcomes for Travellers and Roma.

As the year draws to a close, we remember with sadness in our hearts the members of our community who died this year. May their gentle souls Rest In Peace.

Finally, we thank you for your continued support and trust in us and wish you and your loved ones every blessing for Christmas and for 2023.



*Ann Friel
and Michael Mongan*



**Comhairle Contae
Dhún na nGall**
Donegal County Council



TÚSLA
An Ghníomhaireacht um
Leanaí agus an Teaghlach
Child and Family Agency



**An Roinn Leanaí, Comhionannais,
Míchumais, Lánpháirtíochta agus Óige**
Department of Children, Equality,
Disability, Integration and Youth


ciste na
gcuntas díomhaoin
the dormant
accounts fund

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DONEGAL TRAVELLERS LEAD THE WAY

MORE Travellers than ever are in leadership roles in the Donegal Travellers Project and are representing the voice of Donegal Travellers and Roma, both locally and nationally.

Today Donegal Travellers Project is the largest it has been in its 26 year history and is predominantly managed and led by members of the Traveller community. Of the 28 members of staff of DTP, 21 are from the Traveller community.

"The conditions have been created here in Donegal to promote and ensure that the voice of the Traveller community is represented by the Traveller community. Every member of the Traveller community who comes to work in DTP has taken on a leadership role in their area of work," said Project manager, Siobhan McLaughlin.

Meanwhile a growing number of Donegal Travellers are taking their expertise to boards, committees and conferences, at a local and national level.

Ann Friel, the DTP Assistant Manager is also chairperson of Community Work Ireland and a Director of Pavee Point.

Michael Mongan, Community Health Care worker, is currently the co-chair of Mincéiris Whidden Youth Committee where he is

encouraging more young Travellers to become involved in politics.

Philomena McGinlay represents the DTP on the National Traveller Women's Forum and Margaret Joyce sits on the National Traveller Partnership (NTP). Pamela Cullotty became the first Traveller to sit on the Board of Parent Champions and Katie Boyle represents the DTP on the National Traveller Drug Network.

Maureen Friel is on the board of Donegal Travellers Project and was the first Traveller to take a seat on the board of Errigal college.

A record number of Donegal Travellers are also going on to Higher Education with seven Travellers graduating from Maynooth University this year and six Travellers currently studying at Atlantic Technological University in Letterkenny. Last year, David Friel became the first Traveller from the NW to graduate with an MA degree and is currently studying for a PhD at Atlantic Technological University, Sligo.

Speaking to Trav Times, Donegal-based Senator Eileen Flynn stressed the importance of local organisations like DTP for Travellers.

"We need Traveller organisations because they provide reliable employment for

Traveller people with the right qualifications and the right supports and training. This creates more opportunities for Travellers to go on and seek employment in other organisations and will encourage more young Traveller men and women to come forward."

She added that Travellers are the best equipped to represent themselves.

"As a Traveller you know the issues inside and out. You can't beat the life experience. You can't beat having someone who understands you and your background. Travellers have been leaders for decades

which is only now being recognised and we are now coming forward which is down to the collective work of organisations like Donegal Travellers Project"

Hugh Friel, who recently took on the role of the DTP's Roma Health Coordinator for the north west, is also a member of the Traveller Mental Health Network and the National Traveller Roma Inclusion Strategy.

"Travellers who, like me left school early, went back to education and are now taking up coordinating roles, management roles and leadership roles. I believe the organisation has undergone a massive sea change in that today we are seeing Travellers advocating on behalf of Travellers. The DTP is all about equality and social justice and we are demonstrating that we can also do that on the inside," he said.

The conditions have been created here in Donegal to promote the voice of the Traveller community

I believe the organisation has undergone a massive sea change.

Travellers have been leaders for decades which is only now being recognised and we are now coming forward which is down to the collective work of organisations like Donegal Travellers Project

DTP JOINS DUBLIN PROTEST

Donegal Travellers Project joining Traveller organisations and allies from across the country at a national protest in Dublin in May to highlight the need for urgent action on Traveller Mental Health. Protesters called for targeted measures to tackle the Traveller mental health crisis and for Travellers to be involved in the design and delivery of mental health services.



FOCUS ON EDUCATION

BUILDING CONFIDENCE AT THE HOMEWORK CLUB



The DTP Homework club started in 2002 and today supports Traveller and Roma children by providing a supportive environment for doing homework with the guidance of a team of trained adults. Up to 22 primary school aged Traveller and Roma children attend the club at the Pastoral Centre in Letterkenny after school every Tuesday and Wednesday afternoon. "The children enjoy coming here because they get their homework done with support if they need it. They make new friends and there's also time for us to do some fun and creative activities," explained DTP Education Development Worker, Barry Mooney.

Since becoming Education Development Worker with the DTP, Barry has been working successfully with schools and families to increase participation at the Letterkenny Homework club. He has also been working with DTP staff member, Margaret Joyce in South Donegal to establish a similar Homework club there.

"Our pilot club in Bundoran during October and November has been attended by up to ten children and I have been contacted by a teacher who is interested in working with us so it is looking promising that we will have a second Homework club up and running there in the New Year."

On the day we visited, Kyle met the children as they left school and accompanied them to the club while Barry greeted each one on arrival with a 'High Five'.

They enjoyed a light meal of sandwiches, fresh fruit and cold drinks before getting started on their homework in an informal and relaxed atmosphere. "I think the real value is that the children are developing the habit of completing their homework which gives them a sense of accomplishment. This is having a ripple effect on the other days when they are not here. They are also socialising which is building self-esteem," said Education Development worker Kyle Quill. Working with a small group in a quieter adjoining room, Special Needs Assistant, Mary English, has noticed great improvements in the children's progress.

"One little girl didn't do homework at all when she came here first but today she called me over as soon as I arrived to work with her."

At another table, DTP Roma Development Worker, Sarah Carpaci said that language can often be a struggle for parents in the Roma community when it comes to helping their children with homework. "It is great that the children can come here for extra support. They also get to mix with other children and you can really see their confidence growing."

Homework done, Barry and Kyle distribute art material and blank masks for the children to decorate their own Halloween masks.

Fourth class pupil, Skye admits the arts and crafts time is her favourite part of coming to the club and for Courtney who is in 6th class, making new friends is the best bit. Eoin meanwhile is happy that getting his homework out of the way means more time to play later.



KYLE QUILL: GROWING UP WITH THE DONEGAL TRAVELLERS PROJECT



Kyle Quill, who was born the same year Donegal Travellers Project opened, recently took up a position as the second Education Development Worker with the Project. *"I've been involved with the DTP since I was a baby going to the creche. I attended the Homework club and then the Youth club and even after I finished school and got a job in Halford's I continued to volunteer with the Project, teaching young people how to fix bicycles."*

When Kyle realised that retail work wasn't for him he returned to education. Five years ago he qualified with a Level 7 diploma in community work from NUI Galway and joined the DTP's Primary Health Care team. *"I couldn't tell you the amount of courses I have done since becoming involved with the project but it has all helped get me where I am today. From my work volunteering with youth clubs and young people I knew that was where my passion lay and I just kept taking it to the next level."*

"When the position came up for an Education Development Worker I went for it because I could see the educational disadvantages being faced by young people in the Traveller community and I wanted to make a change within the system."

FOCUS ON EDUCATION

HUGE BOOST FOR DTP WITH RETHINK IRELAND GRANT

The ongoing work of Donegal Travellers Project to improve education outcomes among the Traveller and Roma communities in Donegal received a huge boost this year with a three-year funding package from Rethink Ireland.

DTP is one of just four projects in the country to be supported by Rethink Ireland's Equity in Education Fund which aims to enhance access to education for young people experiencing educational disadvantage based on their cultural identity or geographical location.

The funding of approximately €200,000 over three years will enable DTP to expand its existing team on the ground. Donegal Travellers Project manager, Siobhan McLaughlin said that the team will identify the contributing factors to education disadvantage and work with educational providers to develop actions which improve outcomes and expectations.

"The Rethink Ireland Equity in Education funding provides the Donegal Travellers Project with a really exciting opportunity to begin to look at education disadvantage and to improve outcomes for Traveller and Roma children and young people in an innovative and creative way which puts the voice of the child and young person at the centre of the process, building their hopes and expectations for education and a better future," she said.

Ann Friel, DTP's Primary Health Care Coordinator, described the funding as an investment into Traveller and Roma education in the county.

"It will work towards better outcomes for children and young adults in the education system, see where the gaps are and begin to close them. Over the next three years, time, energy and effort can be put into real and meaningful change," she said.

Education Development worker Barry Mooney, stressed that an important part of the work will be to build more positive relationships between schools and Traveller and Roma families with the aim of reducing absenteeism and supporting Traveller and Roma children to progress further in education.

RETHINK IRELAND Our Social Innovation Fund



*Education Development Workers,
Barry Mooney and Kyle Quill*

GRADUATING FROM MAYNOOTH



Seven Travellers, four from the DTP Primary Health Care Team, along with members and volunteers from the Donegal Intercultural Platform, graduated with a Level 7 Certificate in Community Work in a Changing Ireland from Maynooth University (MU) last May.

Edward Friel, Michael Mongan, Brigidmarie Mongan and Philomena McGinlay from DTP and Caroline Orr, Amanda Boyle and Chantelle Mongan from the Traveller community in Co Donegal all completed the eight-month long course at MU. Some of the course had to be carried out remotely because of the COVID pandemic.



Speaking at the ceremony, new graduate, Brigidmarie Mongan highlighted the importance of Traveller representation in education at all levels.

"More Travellers are yearning for education and going back to school and this is making education institutions change the way of working to be more inclusive of the Traveller community."

Praising the work of the DTP, Orla Callaghan, Chairperson of Donegal Travellers Project, said the organisation challenged systemic inequalities and ensured opportunities for Black and Minority Ethnic communities including the Traveller and Roma communities to progress to Third Level.

She thanked the funders of the Certificate Programme with Maynooth University, including the Special European Union Programmes Bodies and Donegal County Council for their support and Letterkenny Institute of Technology, now called Atlantic Technological University (ATU), for hosting the conferring ceremony. Handing out certificates, International Human Rights

champion, Anastasia Crickley stressed the importance of Traveller leadership.

Donegal Travellers are participating more than ever in Third Level education. This year the DTP education team is offering support to six young Travellers who are currently studying a diverse range of courses at the Atlantic Technological University (ATU) in Letterkenny.



DTP staff members Edward Friel, Brigidmarie Mongan and Michael Mongan graduating with a Level 7 Certificate in Community Work in a Changing Ireland from Maynooth University at ATU last May. Missing from the picture is DTP staff member Philomena McGinlay. A total of seven Travellers from Co Donegal graduated on the day.

FOCUS ON EDUCATION

MUD PIES AND FAIRY FORTS AT ST GABRIEL'S

For decades, staff at the DTP's St Gabriel's Intercultural Preschool have been giving their all to ensure that the children in their care get the best possible preschool experience and preparation for primary school.



St Gabriel's Staff

Back Row - Sandra McDaid, Margaret Kelly, Samantha Boyle, Jessica Monagle. Front Row- Kelly McClafferty (Team Leader) and Margaret McConigley

Between them, Kelly McClafferty, Margaret McConigley, Margaret Kelly, Sandra McDaid, Samantha Boyle and CE worker, Jessica Monagle, have clocked up almost 50 years at St Gabriel's, giving hundreds of children their first happy experience of education.

In 1997, St Gabriel's opened as a preschool and the first staff from the Traveller community received training in childcare. Four years later, the preschool welcomed children from ethnic minority groups including Roma.



Today, St Gabriel's preschool on Convent Road is an innovative model, combining interculturalism and indoor/outdoor activity and is attended by upwards on 40 preschool children from up to a dozen ethnic backgrounds.

But Travellers are not just accessing the service. They are designing and leading the service. Most of the full and part time staff who host morning and afternoon sessions, are from the Traveller community, are fully qualified childcare workers and have received additional training in Interculturalism and Diversity.

Lead Teacher, Kelly McClafferty who joined the team in 2010, explained that St Gabriel's offers up to two years of the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) programme, planning as much as they can to make the experiences enjoyable for the children while taking their interests on board.

In 2017, the preschool began expanding its outdoor learning and play area which today includes an outdoor

classroom, sensory areas, a playhouse, a storytelling dome, a sand pit, and garden, all designed to enable learning activities to take place outdoors as well as inside the school. There is a strong emphasis on imaginative play with a mud area and fairy fort proving popular attractions for the children.

"Everything we do inside, we can also do outside. We are outside as much as we can and the children love it. It's also good for their immune systems. They all have full outdoor gear and wellies so we are suited and booted for all occasions, unless there has been a weather warning," said Kelly.

This year St Gabriel's signed up to the Better Start National Early Years Quality Development Programme, a national programme to promote and enhance inclusive high-quality Early Learning and Care. Plans are also underway to expand the vegetable garden to include sensory plants and flowers and make it even more child-friendly.



"We try to make them as comfortable and happy as possible coming in so that they become confident wee learners going out the doors, ready for primary school."

DTP LAUNCHES ROMA EDUCATION GUIDE

This year, DTP published a unique booklet on how the education system works in Ireland and in particular in County Donegal. The booklet was translated Romanian, Ukrainian and Polish with the support of CYPSC and Tusla. Its aim is to support Roma families in understanding the education system which will lead to improved outcomes for Roma children and young people at all levels of education across the county.

The booklet provides an overview of the different levels and types of education. It also details the supports that are available to access and fully participate in education. It explains the right of the child to education, and the responsibilities of parents and guardians to ensure that children attend compulsory education between the ages of 6-16.

Donegal Travellers Project supports Traveller and Roma parents to ensure that children and young people are able to access the opportunities for education in Donegal.



NEW DTP WOMEN'S AWARENESS WORKERS



DTP Women's Awareness Workers Margaret Joyce and Philomena McGinlay

Two Donegal based Traveller women have embarked on a project to promote gender equality for Traveller women and raise awareness about domestic, sexual and gender-based violence and to work with the support services to ensure that the needs of Traveller women are being met in a culturally sensitive manner.

Community health workers, Philomena McGinlay and Margaret Joyce have taken on the new roles as Traveller Women's Awareness workers in the Tusla-funded pilot project with Pavee Point to address barriers to safety and protection for Traveller women. They have undergone training to build their skills and knowledge and are currently working with the local and regional support services in Co Donegal and North Leitrim to highlight the experiences of Traveller women

TRAVELLER WOMENS AWARENESS WORK GETS UNDERWAY

and discuss the barriers they face when trying to access these services and better ways of working together. They are now working on the ground with women and girls to deliver information and to ensure that women can access the support services.

"Domestic violence is not a part of our culture, it is not a part of anyone's culture and Traveller women experience double barriers when it comes to accessing supports that are needed," explained Philomena.

"We as Traveller Women Awareness workers now know the services that are out there such as women's centres and refuges, and our work will be to provide, encourage, support and create the conditions for Traveller women to access these services."

She said that as Travellers, the two new workers understand barriers such as fear and discrimination and would be able to use their knowledge and training to address these obstacles. "Our message to Traveller women is that

we at the DTP are here for you. We are not here to judge and the door is always open even if you just want to come into the office just for a cup of tea or a chat and take time to breathe."

Margaret, who is based at the DTP's south Donegal office in Ballyshannon, stressed that their role would be to empower women to seek support and to make the services more accessible.

"Traveller women experience massive health inequalities compared to women in the general population. We will work to minimise that gap so that Traveller women are able to access the services that are needed and that should be available to them."

The project is one of five similar projects nationally and is a continuation of work started by the DTP several years ago when a gender equality course began a conversation about women's rights and created a space for Traveller women to come together to talk about their lived experiences.

"It is about empowering Traveller women to make change for themselves after they make that initial contact with us and we will support them through that."

TRAVELLER WOMEN MUST BE INCLUDED IN DECISION-MAKING

DTP Health worker, Margaret Joyce represented Traveller women at a recent conference of the National Women's Council and called on women's organisations to include Traveller women at all levels.

Speaking at the 'Claiming our Space' conference for rural women, Margaret highlighted the importance of Travellers' voices being present when decisions were being made which concerned them.

"All women's organisations should include Traveller women from the very beginning. We need to be hearing the Traveller voices. We know what Travellers needs are because we are living it every day.

"Anyone sitting here from any organisation, look at your boards, look at your committees, look at your policies, look at your practices. Ask yourselves are Travellers included and if we are not included, why not?"

We need to be hearing the Traveller voices.

Margaret also highlighted some of the additional barriers faced by Traveller and Roma women in rural Ireland and when it comes to accessing health and accommodation services, as well as the ongoing challenge of discrimination and the additional language barriers faced by the Roma community.



DTP's Margaret Joyce pictured with Minister for Rural and Community Development, Heather Humphreys and other guests at the Claiming Our Space National Women's Council conference for rural women.

And she spoke of the importance of the extended family in the Traveller community.

"Without the support of our mothers and grandmothers us younger women would be absolutely lost and the same education opportunities would not have been there for us."

HEALTH SPECIAL

NATIONAL TRAVELLER HEALTH ACTION PLAN LAUNCHED

The long awaited National Traveller Health Action Plan (NTHAP) to tackle health inequalities among the Traveller community was launched on 28 November by the Department of Health.

The plan, developed by the HSE in consultation with Donegal Travellers Project and other Traveller representative organisations, will have a budget of €1.3 million in 2023. It will be monitored on an ongoing basis and updated at the end of 2027.

Representing Donegal Travellers Project at the launch were Primary Health Care Coordinator and Assistant Manager, Ann Friel, DTP Manager, Siobhan McLaughlin and Community Development and Health Worker, Kate Hagan. Ann Friel said the plan strengthens the hand of local organisations to address health inequality through its implementation at a local level.

"We have waited a long time for this to happen and while we recognise that further investment will be required, this funding will enable us to develop solutions to address Traveller Health inequalities."

Launching the plan, Health Minister, Stephen Donnelly acknowledged that the State has not done enough historically to improve Traveller health.



Pictured at the launch of the National Traveller Health Action Plan in Dublin (left to right) Ann Friel (DTP), Kate Hagan (DTP) and Siobhan McLaughlin (DTP)

He was one of three Government Ministers who attended the HSE launch of the first plan of its kind. Minister Donnelly said that the launch marked the beginning of a new relationship between the State and the Traveller community.

"We are starting a new relationship where the State listens," he said, pledging ongoing

Government support and to build up Traveller Healthcare Projects as part of the new plan.

Roderic O'Gorman, Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth said the new plan would be "key to reducing the health inequalities which exist for Travellers in our society".

Mary Brigid Collins, Pavee Point Traveller Primary Health Care Project, said that Travellers, Traveller organisations and Primary Health Care Projects around the country had worked very hard with the HSE to ensure that this plan has the potential to bring about real positive change for the Traveller community.

"This plan is important because it acknowledges the systemic racism and discrimination that has existed for years, it acknowledges the social determinants of health - education, employment and accommodation - and commits to strengthening partnership working between the HSE, Traveller Health Units and local Traveller organisations/Traveller Primary Health Care Projects in the design and delivery of health services."

OUR VOICES, OUR LIVES, OUR FUTURE



"As Traveller women we are strong. We are Powerful. We need to believe in ourselves." This was the message from the DTP Health and Wellbeing day; Our Voices, Our Lives, Our Future, which was held in Ballybofey at the end of November.

Up to 60 Traveller women from across Donegal attended the event, organised by Traveller women for Traveller women.

Chair, Ann Friel, DTP Primary Health Care Coordinator, urged Traveller women to be ambitious about their future.

"We have a lot to say as Traveller women and our voices matter. This is a chance for us to share our lived realities and our experiences as Traveller women in Irish society and to discuss what the future holds for us," she said.

Also on the day, DTP Primary Health Care workers, Philomena McGinlay and Margaret Joyce launched the Traveller Women's Awareness Project.

The women participated in round table discussions on Health, Gender Equality, Education, Culture, Employment, Accommodation and Mental Health before feeding back their findings to the main group. These will be used by the DTP in planning its programmes for 2023.

The Traveller women were also invited to place personal messages on a Christmas Tree of Hope and Expectations, which will be on display at the DTP offices in Letterkenny until January.

Guest speaker, Maria Joyce from the National Traveller Women's Forum said that Traveller women bore the greater burden in relation to the home and engagement with the services and the State."

The day included wellness treatments, care packs and lunch for the women, in recognition of their contribution towards keeping their families safe during the COVID pandemic.

HEALTH SPECIAL

'HEARING THE UNHEARD' MENTAL HEALTH CONFERENCE HELP US TO HELP OURSELVES

Donegal based senator, Eileen Flynn called on Government to provide meaningful services led by Travellers to tackle the mental health crisis in the Traveller community when she addressed a Mental Health conference in Sligo in October. Senator Flynn was speaking about the high suicide rate among Travellers at the 'Hearing the Unheard' conference which was organised by Donegal



"We need to mind each other more now than ever, because society is tough on us and we shouldn't be tough on each other."
- Senator Eileen Flynn

Traveller Primary Healthcare projects have rolled out to meet the needs and interests of Travellers living in the North West. These include one-to-one walks and talks, wellness events, community garden projects, health and wellbeing resilience workshops, fitness and health events, and support in accessing mental health services and counselling supports. "These initiatives work to promote positive mental health among Travellers that is culturally appropriate and meets the needs of the community," she said.

Julie Duke, the first Traveller in Ireland to be appointed by the HSE as a peer mental health support worker in Cavan, urged Travellers to reach out to the services for help but also urged service providers to be more aware of the additional challenges faced by Travellers when they reach out. "Please

keep an open mind when a Traveller comes through your door. The first couple of times will be around the Traveller assessing you, not you assessing them. Do they feel safe? Can they trust you? Will there be a backlash from them searching for help?



"So many travellers hide the pain through addictions and just surviving day by day, all because they cannot live their life in honesty."
Darren Collins, Gay Traveller man, Offaly/ Dublin

Will it cause more problems for them or their family? They could be thinking 'do you like Travellers or have you a bias against them' and they will hold back 98 per cent of the reason they came through the door in the first place."

In November, three members of DTP Primary Health Care workers, Martin Mongan, Michael Mongan and Katie Boyle attended the HSE National Traveller Mental Health Conference in Croke Park at which Senator Eileen Flynn again called for immediate action on the inequalities in which Traveller mental health challenges were rooted.



"I turned to alcohol to dull the pain and I ended up doing things I would never consider doing...but eventually I reached out to the Mental Health Services and to friends and I gradually managed to get my life back in control."
Winnie Ward, Traveller, Sligo

"If you don't have good accommodation, you're not going to have good education or good outcomes. We're making progress, but while we make progress there's members of our community dying by suicide every day."



"It is our role to create the conditions to support positive mental health initiatives to address health inequalities among the Traveller community." -Brigidmarie Mongan, Primary Health Care worker, Donegal Travellers Project

"There is no shame in talking about mental health, openly and honestly"
-Julie Duke, Ireland's first Traveller Peer Mental Health Support Worker, HSE Cavan



know what the solutions are for our community and what we need is a budget that focuses specifically on Traveller Mental Health and for the Government to implement those solutions with meaningful services," she said. DTP Primary Healthcare worker, Brigidmarie Mongan outlined the many mental health initiatives which



"We need to learn to hear the unheard, and to reach out to persons of all ages who are presenting for help or have fallen through the cracks." Bernadette Mongan, Manager, Sligo Traveller Support Group

POSITIVE STEPS TOWARDS GOOD MENTAL HEALTH

TIME ALONE

Try and make time for yourself. Find something you will enjoy and that works for you.

EXERCISING

Regular exercise can really help if you're feeling depressed, stressed or anxious.

EATING WELL

Having a balanced diet will not only help the way that you feel but also the way that you think.

DRINK SENSIBLY

Drinking alcohol to deal with problems will only make things worse.

SURVIVING

Try not to be too hard on yourself. We can all have difficult days from time to time.

ASKING FOR HELP

Everyone needs help from time to time. It's ok to ask for help, even though it feels difficult sometimes.

TALKING ABOUT IT

Most people feel isolated and overwhelmed by their problems sometimes. It can help to share your feelings.

STAYING IN TOUCH WITH FRIENDS

You don't have to be strong and struggle on alone. Friends are especially important at difficult times.

DOING SOMETHING CREATIVE

All kinds of creative things can help if you are anxious or low.

ACCEPTING WHO YOU ARE

Our beliefs, background, religion, race, gender and sexuality make us who we are. We all have something to offer.

GETTING INVOLVED

Meeting new people and getting involved in things can make all the difference - for you and for others.

SUPPORTS:

National Traveller Counselling Service

Tel: 01 8685761/086 308 1476

Email: info@travellercounselling.ie

National Traveller Mental Health Service

Tel: 01 8721094 (Monday -Friday 9am -5pm, 4pm Fridays), Email: info@exchangehouse.ie

HEALTH SPECIAL

RESEARCH POINTS TO IMPACT OF DISCRIMINATION AND EXCLUSION ON TRAVELLER MEN'S HEALTH



At the launch of the DTP Research in Traveller Men's Health: Thomas Pringle TD, Mags Casey (Tipperary Rural Travellers Project), David Friel (Main Researcher), Hugh Friel (DTP), Martin Mongan (DTP), Senator Eileen Flynn, Eddie Friel (DTP)

New research by the Donegal Travellers Project highlights the devastating impact of discrimination and exclusion on the mental health of Traveller men across education, employment, housing and health, which is contributing to the disproportionately high suicide levels.

12 Traveller men in County Donegal took part in the research representing the largest ever sample of only Traveller men to participate in research regarding their mental health. It is also the first ever research in the country to be led by a Traveller man as researcher, with an advisory group made up of all Traveller men, and that will target Traveller men in terms of the interventions.

Hugh Friel, former Men's Development Worker with the Donegal Travellers Project, described the findings as hugely significant because they confirm the social determinants of health that are having a negative impact on the mental health of Traveller men.

"We know the statistics that Traveller men are almost seven times more likely to die by suicide than the general population and that Traveller men in general die 15 years younger

than our settled peers. What we now have is real-life factual stories coming from real people who experience the services, who experience society and how it effects them.

"The discrimination that is happening Travellers from a young age is laying out a path for Traveller men that is driving these statistics. We need to use these findings to identify interventions that would enhance the mental health status, prospects and outcomes for Traveller men," he said.

The research which is supported by Connecting for Life Donegal- part of a National strategy to reduce suicide-and the National Traveller Partnership, was conducted by Donegal Traveller, David Friel, with the support of a Traveller Men's Advisory Group from the Donegal Travellers Project.

In depth interviews were carried out with the 12 men aged 18-65, from a broad range of backgrounds including homelessness, experience of prison and from the LGBTQ community. Speaking about their lives, the men pin-pointed severe accommodation deprivation and homelessness as key factors which leads to anxiety and low self-esteem. Another factor highlighted was early childhood experiences of racism, segregation and low expectations in the school setting which were internalised, and had a long-term impact on their mental health.

The study also showed how unemployment caused the onset of psychological distress and low self-worth. Poverty and poor physical health also had a negative impact on mental health while higher risk factors included bereavement, grief, drugs and alcohol and suicidal feelings.

The men also reported a lack of access to mental health supports, masculinity stereotypes, racism, discrimination and the COVID-19 pandemic as all having a detrimental impact on their mental wellbeing. Researcher, David Friel described the findings as significant, not just for addressing the men's perspective but for the vision of change and reform it provided. "This is a landmark study in both its conduct and findings. From this research, I would like to see a commitment at local, regional and national levels to create conditions for Traveller men to be free from the social, structural, cultural and economic determinants that negatively impact their mental health," he said.



DAVID FRIEL currently works as a Training and Development Officer with the Think Equality Donegal project, a new initiative by DTP, Donegal Local Development Company (DLDC) and

Donegal Intercultural Platform (DIP) which is working to eliminate prejudice, discrimination and racism across Donegal. He is studying for a PhD at ATU Sligo in which he is researching the impact of COVID-19 on Irish Travellers. He is also delivering a module on Traveller Ethnicity and Rights at University College Dublin. Last year David became the first member of the Traveller Community in the North West to graduate with an MA degree in Social Care and Justice. He describes himself as passionate about human rights, social justice and equality for everyone who experiences marginalisation in Irish society.



MARTIN MONGAN

Martin Mongan who recently took up position as the Men's Health Worker on the DTP Primary Health Care team has been involved with the project since childhood, volunteering with youth groups and training and working in youth leadership. Martin understands the

challenges of his new role but also believes some positive changes are happening.

"A lot of Traveller men feel very isolated and might have very little contact with people which has an effect on your physical and mental health. But when you can find that one to one safe space, you can start to build a relationship with them and they will start to talk. I find that men today

are more willing to talk about their mental health than in the past."

He was one of the key workers involved in the DTP research work into Traveller Men's Mental Health and believes its findings will have a significant impact on informing his work.

"We now have evidence to show to services and funders and people in authority of what the issues are and how they begin at a young age. Firstly we need schools to realise they need to be more understanding of young Traveller people so that they don't fall behind. A lack of good education and discrimination against Travellers has a knock-on effect through life on employment, accommodation and mental health. They are all connected."

Martin works as part of a team with DTP Community Development Workers, Michael Mongan and Eddie Friel on Men's Health and Eyad Meshael on Traveller Accommodation.

ROMA HEALTH STRATEGY FOR NORTH WEST

A health-focused needs analysis of the Roma community in the north west is being carried out by the DTP with the aim of developing a health plan for the community in the region.

Hugh Friel, DTP's Roma Health coordinator has the responsibility of implementing the Roma health needs analysis for Sligo, Leitrim and Donegal, alongside Roma Community Health worker, Sarah Carpaci. This work is funded by the HSE through their National Social Inclusion office and is being carried out by the DTP's Roma Development and Project Management Teams.

The work includes talking to and building relationships with the Roma population across the region. These conversations and the needs analysis will form the basis for a Roma Health Plan for Sligo, Leitrim and Donegal.

"The DTP has demonstrated its commitment to human rights by promoting the inclusion of the Roma community in our work and collaborating with the HSE to promote



DTP ROMA TEAM: L-R Barry Mooney, Sarah Carpaci, Hugh Friel, Eyad Meshsel and Bernie Tamsitt

health equality for the Roma community. Building relationships and trust with the Roma community is extremely important to Donegal Travellers Project. From this we can develop a health plan to promote health equality with and for the Roma community in the region," explained Hugh.

As a Roma woman, Sarah Carpaci brings her community expertise and commitment to equality to the work of the health project at all stages. Last June, Sarah worked to organise the health and wellbeing day with the Roma community and has led on organising the Roma women's group with a health focus.



SARAH CARPACI

Sarah Carpaci currently works as a Community Health Worker under the Roma Health Project and Roma Development and Advocacy Project with the DTP as well as training as a Child Care worker.

Sarah joined the Donegal Travellers Project last year as a trainee Community Health Worker with the DTP's Community Development and Advocacy Project working with the Roma community. She brings an understanding

of the culture and norms of the Roma community to the Project, sharing her knowledge and expertise while also informing the development of the Roma Project in all of the DTP's practice.

"I support members of the Roma community who have language difficulties and are trying to access services such as health and education. Not having the language is a huge barrier when it comes to not being able to explain what is going on in their lives and this has huge implications and can lead to social exclusion," she said.

ROMA GENOCIDE EXHIBITION AT COUNTY MUSEUM

A haunting exhibition highlighting Roma and German Sinti genocide during World War 2 was hosted by the DTP's Roma Project at the Donegal County Museum in March. An estimated half a million European Roma lives were lost under the Nazi regime between 1939-1945. The exhibition, curated by Professor Eve Rosenhaft, a professor of German Historical Studies at the University of Liverpool, focused on the fate of nine families, who were the subject of a unique photo archive. Joleen Kuyper, former DTP Community Development and Advocacy Worker with the Roma community, urged those present to stand up to racism in whatever form it takes.

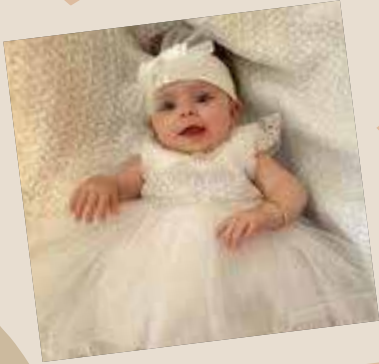


EMBROIDERY CIRCLE

Textile artist, Deborah Stockdale led a series of workshops with the DTP's Roma Women's group in Dillon's Hotel, Letterkenny in November. The group will design and make individual hand-embroidered shawls in keeping with Roma tradition and heritage. One shawl will also be donated to the Donegal Travellers Project. Over the course of the workshops the women will also participate in informal conversations about health issues with the Roma Community Healthcare Worker and the wider DTP Primary Health Care team.



CONGRATULATIONS AND CELEBRATIONS!



Welcome to the world, Precious McDonagh



Pamela and Tommy Cullotty on their Wedding Day



Skye McGinlay on her First Communion Day



Jay McDonagh with Dad, John on his First Communion Day



David and Leah Friel on their Wedding Day



Annie and Paddy Mongan celebrating Annie's 70th birthday



Proud parents, Lena and Martin McDonagh with daughters Brigidmarie Mongan and Chantelle McDonagh who graduated from Maynooth University this year.



Agnes Friel who turned 87 years old



Robert Mitchell on his First Communion Day

TRAVELLER PRIDE WEEK 2022

CELEBRATING TRAVELLER PRIDE IN DONEGAL

DTP celebrated Traveller Pride in Donegal this year with a week-long programme of events and celebrations.

The festivities got underway with the launch of the Traveller Pride 'Still Here Still Proud' photographic exhibition in Letterkenny County Museum. This wonderful collection of photographs by

photographer, Clive

Wasson, offers a unique insight into the Traveller community living across County Donegal and was the basis for last year's Still Here Still Proud book, published by Donegal Travellers Project.

DTP is hugely grateful to everyone who visited the exhibition and to the Traveller

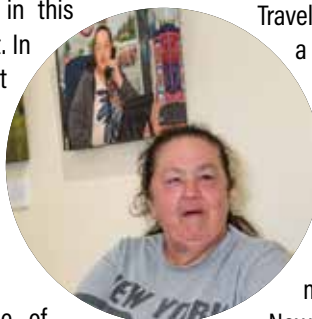
community for taking part in this historic social history project. In the words of DTP's Assistant Manager Ann Friel, the pictures tell the story of identity, history and culture and show the deep roots of Traveller Pride in Donegal living through Covid-19.

Also during the week, one of Ireland's last two Traveller tinsmiths, Tom McDonnell showcased the skill of traditional tin-smithing. In collaboration with the Earagail Arts Festival, Tom hosted two well attended workshops showing each group how the skillful trade works.

Traveller Pride celebrations ended on a high note with young Donegal Traveller, Mary Josephine Ward, daughter of Brian & Geraldine Ward, performing the traditional song 'Tinker Boy' for TG4 as part of the Earagail Arts Festival. Mary Josephine will make her television debut in the New Year.

DTP extends thanks to Donegal County Museum, Creative Ireland, Earagail Arts Festival and Donegal County Council for their continued support of its work promoting and celebrating Traveller Pride in Donegal.

DTP is committed to creating an equal and inclusive Donegal and each year Traveller Pride Week gives the organisation an opportunity to promote dialogue and inclusion.



LAST OF THE TINSMITHS



Tinsmith Tom McDonnell showcasing his trade

A STAR IS BORN



Mary Josephine Ward singing for TG4

BIG DAY OUT IN ARDS AND KERRYTOWN



After three years in isolation during the pandemic, older members of the Donegal Traveller community were delighted to get back on the road in September with a memorable trip to Ards Friary and Kerrytown.

The trip was organised by the Donegal Travellers Project Primary Health Care Team

Worker with Older People, Katie Boyle, who described it afterwards as a day of prayer, healing and remembering the sick and bereaved. It was also a day for reconnecting with old friends and making new ones.

The group was warmly welcomed to Ards by Capuchin priest, Father Flann Lynch who offered a healing Mass for their intentions and invited Katie to the altar to remember those members of the community who were too unwell to be there in person.

Father Flann praised Travellers for the depth of their faith and their belief in the power of prayer. Candles were lit and the group was blessed by St Padre's Pio glove which has been in the care of Brother Alphonsus at the friary since the death of the Italian saint in 1968.

After a tasty home-cooked lunch at the friary the group purchased religious souvenirs in the shop and had them blessed by Father Flann. The next stop was Kerrytown, near Dungloe, where

an apparition of the Blessed Virgin is reported to have appeared to two young sisters over 80 years ago.

The scene of the apparition is now a grotto, visited by hundreds of people annually, who pray and leave mementos of loved ones. The group also visited

the Holy Well and house and left their special intentions.

"Everyone really enjoyed the trip especially because it had been so long since the last one. It broke the isolation and was very meaningful for them. It brought them together as older Travellers and they loved every minute of it," said

Katie.

The trip took the group along Donegal's north and west coast, evoking memories for Travellers of bygone days.

"It brought back good memories for them of going along those roads in a horse and trap and they recalled stories of how they would have camped along the roadside and of people who used to live there," said Katie.

OLDER PERSONS' WORKER KATIE BOYLE

After many years of working in a range of different roles in the DTP, Katie Boyle found one that she particularly likes when she took on the role of Older Persons Worker last February.

"I find it brilliant. I love it. I already knew all the older Travellers in Donegal and I have a good working relationship with them. When I call to their homes, they know I am there to provide support for them. My job is to develop a professional working relationship with care and consideration for older people."

The DTP Primary Health Care team worked tirelessly throughout the pandemic maintaining telephone contact with the older more vulnerable members of the community and as we have come out of COVID, Katie and the Primary Health Care team has begun organising social events and health and well-being days including chiropody, reflexology and healthy eating programmes. Next year plans are underway for monthly visits to every older person.

Katie believes that being able to socialise again has made a huge positive difference in their lives.

"They missed the human interaction so they were delighted to see us back. They know we are here for the right reasons. They know we are here for them."



DTP INTERCULTURAL STUDIES COURSE

Seven members of staff from Donegal Travellers Project recently completed the ChangeMakers Intercultural Studies QQI Level 5 course at the new Donegal ETB training centre in Letterkenny. The ten-week course, facilitated by Francine Blaché-Breen, promoted interculturalism, diversity and equality from an Irish and international perspective. The course will equip the staff to go out and deliver sessions on interculturalism for the DTP's own Intercultural Training initiative, supporting them to become trainers themselves. The course was funded by Donegal ETB under the Community Education Support Programme. DTP participants were Philomena McGinlay, Brigidmarie Mongan, Margaret Joyce, Edward Friel, Kieran Mongan, Michael Mongan and Barry Mooney.



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MID-TERM FUN IN SOUTH DONEGAL

Kieran Mongan leading the midterm fun with this group of young Travellers in South Donegal who enjoyed a day of fun, games and arts and crafts with the Donegal Travellers Project during the Halloween mid term break! Over the day, over a dozen children engaged with the DTP team learning skills such as team work and communication and even how to design their own t-shirts! The day ended with a trip to the cinema in Bundoran!



TEN WAYS TO SAVE ENERGY AND LOWER ELECTRICITY COSTS

01 BOILING WATER

Whether it's in the kettle for a cup of tea or on the cooker, only boil the amount of water that you actually need, otherwise it will take longer and use more power.

02 COOKER

When cooking on the hob, try to make sure the pan completely covers the gas or electric ring you're using to prevent heat escaping and don't forget the lid. Heat will escape and it will take longer to boil without the lid.

03 SIMMER

Simmering instead of boiling saves energy. By turning down the heat once the water has reached boiling point, your food will still cook but you could save up to €50 a year.

04 LIGHTBULBS

While there will be an initial cost, switching to LED lightbulbs saves money because they last much longer.

05 WASHING MACHINE

Don't run your washing machine until it is full and run it on the eco setting or at a lower temperature. Washing your clothes at 30 degrees instead of 40 degrees will save you money. An extra spin gets clothes much drier.



06 DOORS AND WINDOWS

Listen to your mother. Close doors between rooms that are heated and unheated to keep the heat in. Also close curtains to keep heat in, but open them in the morning to let the heat of the sun in.

07 APPLIANCES

Your phone, tablet or TV still use energy on standby. Switch off all your appliances at night and when you are not home. If you are away, plug them out. Turn off lights when you are leaving a room or when you do not need them.

08 FRIDGE/FREEZER

Don't leave the fridge door open for too long while getting food. For every 10-20 seconds the door is open it takes 45 minutes for the fridge to cool down to its original temperature. Don't put warm or hot food straight into the fridge or freezer. It has to work extra hard and draw more energy to cool it down.

09 SHOWERS

Try not to spend more than five minutes in the shower. A shower typically uses 20% of the energy compared to a full bath, so keep the bath as a treat.

10 TAPS

When washing your hands, brushing your teeth, or rinsing the dishes, don't leave the tap running too long as you're literally pouring money down the drain.



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