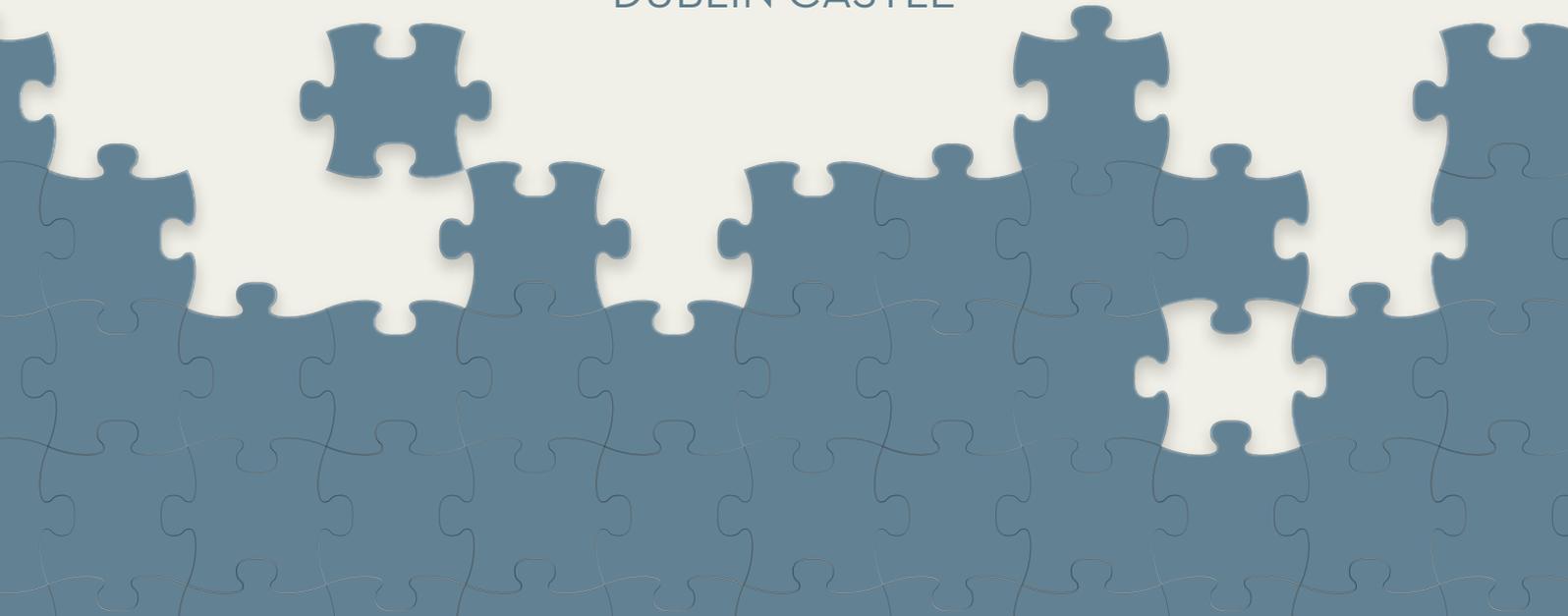


# TRAVELLERS IN PRISON INITIATIVE **NATIONAL CONFERENCE**

OCTOBER 20<sup>TH</sup> 2017  
DUBLIN CASTLE



CONFERENCE REPORT RACHEL DOYLE

Photos by Derek Speirs

Artwork by Travellers in custody in  
Arbour Hill, Cork and Wheatfield Prisons.

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# FOREWORD BY STEPHEN ROURKE

## CHAIRPERSON OF TPI STEERING GROUP

It gives me great pleasure to contribute to this report on the TPI National Conference which took place on 20th October 2017. I had the honour of chairing the TPI Steering Group from April 2015 onwards and, during this period of time, I was hugely impressed by the desire and the commitment of members of the inter-agency Steering Group to enabling Travellers to take advantage of opportunities for self-development and acquiring new skills and knowledge whilst in prison; and to lessening the likelihood of recidivism amongst Traveller prisoners upon release from prison.

It is recognised that it may take some time to fully achieve all of these goals. However, I believe that a very positive start has been made by the TPI on a number of different fronts. The TPI has played a very significant and influential role in the development of a new ethnic identifier for prisoners (which will give a much more accurate representation of the number of Travellers in Irish prisons); in the establishment of Traveller led peer support groups for Travellers in prison; in assisting various mediation and conflict resolution projects and programmes in Irish prisons; in developing new models of family support for Traveller families with members in prison; and in setting up new strategies for working with Traveller women in prison. These are all positive and noteworthy developments which will be built on and strengthened over the next few years.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank those people and organisations who have made very important contributions to the development of the TPI - through their membership of the TPI Steering Group, through their participation in TPI projects and programmes, through their provision of funding to the TPI. The TPI has been an inter-agency and inter-organisation initiative of the highest order and has involved significant levels of buy-in from all of the national Traveller organisations, from key statutory agencies i.e. Irish Prison Service, The Probation Service, HSE, Education and Training Boards and national community and voluntary organisations. These agencies and organisations have all treated each other with trust and respect and they have all worked towards the common goals of reducing the number of Travellers in Irish prisons and in improving outcomes for Travellers who are serving prison sentences.

Finally I would like to take this opportunity to thank Anne Costello, Co-ordinator of the TPI, for her inspirational leadership in the development of the TPI. There can be little doubt that the TPI would not have achieved what it has without the drive, the commitment, the professionalism and the passion of Anne Costello. Go raibh mile maith agat, Anne

Finally I would like to take this opportunity to thank Anne Costello, Co-ordinator of the TPI, for her inspirational leadership in the development of the TPI. There can be little doubt that the TPI would not have achieved what it has without the drive, the commitment, the professionalism and the passion of Anne Costello. Go raibh mile maith agat, Anne

### **Stephen Rourke**

*Chairperson of TPI Steering Group and Trustee of St Stephen's Green Trust*



Stephen Rourke

# INTRODUCTION

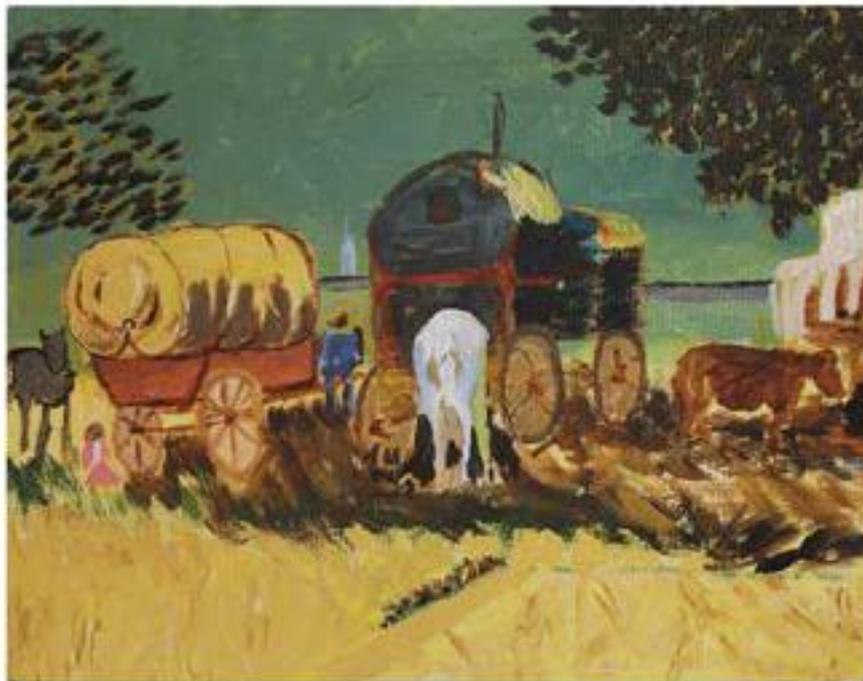
## TRAVELLERS IN PRISON INITIATIVE

While there are no official statistics on the number of Travellers in prison, the Irish Prison Service acknowledges that Travellers are significantly overrepresented. Although Travellers only account for approximately 0.6% of the overall population in the ROI, the Irish Prison Service estimates that Travellers account for 22% of the female prison population and 15% of the male prison population.

The Travellers in Prison Initiative (TPI) developed as a response to the particular needs and circumstances of Travellers within the 14 prisons in the Republic of Ireland (ROI), which were highlighted in the Irish Penal Reform Trust's 2014 publication, 'Travellers in the Irish Prison System: A qualitative study'. This research report captured some of the challenges and difficulties experienced by Travellers in Irish prisons.

An interagency steering group was appointed to guide the direction of the TPI and includes representatives from Pavee Point Traveller & Roma Centre, the National Traveller Women's Forum, the Irish Traveller Movement, the Irish Prison Service, the Probation Service, the Irish Penal Reform Trust, Mincéirs Whiden, Exchange House, Traveller Counselling Service, the HSE Social Inclusion Unit, IASIO, the Irish Red Cross, the Education and Training Board, Traveller Mediation Service and Parish of the Travelling People.

Key elements of the work of the Travellers in Prison Initiative include; Building a knowledge base about Travellers in prison; Increasing and improving access to prison-based services for Travellers; Strengthening supports for families of Travellers in prison, and after prison; Strengthening self-identity and self-advocacy for Travellers in prison; Documenting and Sharing the Learning.



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1 Available at: [http://www.iprt.ie/files/IPRT\\_Travellers\\_Report\\_web.pdf](http://www.iprt.ie/files/IPRT_Travellers_Report_web.pdf)

# TRAVELLERS IN PRISON INITIATIVE CONFERENCE

On October 20<sup>th</sup> 2017, the Travellers in Prison Initiative held a major national conference in Dublin Castle. The conference brought together key stakeholders including Irish Prison Service and Probation service staff, members of the legal profession, Travellers (including those with experience of the prison and probation service), members of the Travellers in Prison Initiative Steering Group, funders, Traveller organisations, government and non-government organisations.

The aims of the conference were;

- To raise awareness amongst decision makers, service providers/practitioners and community workers about the issues for Travellers in prison;
- To showcase what has been achieved through TPI (by working collaboratively using interagency and community development approaches);
- To create a space to work collectively to agree a strategy to develop a sustainable response to improve outcomes and to reduce rates of imprisonment.

Conference Chairs

Maria Joyce - National Traveller Women's Forum

Martin Collins - Pavee Point Traveller and Roma Centre



Maria Joyce



Martin Collins

# INTRODUCTION TO THE CONFERENCE

## MAGS CASEY, TIPPERARY RURAL TRAVELLERS PROJECT

Mags welcomed all participants to the conference expressing her appreciation for the huge numbers of people present and her hope that the conference would be an interesting one with concrete outcomes and achievements. She introduced and paid tribute to the Chairpersons of the conference, Maria Joyce and Martin Collins and noted the significance of having two Travellers in the role as conference chairs.

Maria Joyce she said, is an important role model for Traveller women, an amazing woman who has for the last 25 years been a well-known activist for Traveller women's rights, negotiating with Government Departments on behalf of Traveller women and Travellers. She played a key role, Mags said, in the campaign for recognition of Traveller ethnicity by the Irish Government.

Mags introduced Martin Collins as a also a well-known activist, a huge role model for the Traveller community who has fought extremely hard through all of his work for the achievement of Travellers human rights.

In introducing the conference, Mags said that the day would provide an opportunity to explore the challenges faced by Travellers in prison, and hopefully to explore ways to jointly address these challenges. Prisons all over the world, she said, are overpopulated with men and women from deprived backgrounds and minority ethnic groups. We should not be surprised then, she said, that Irish prisons are overpopulated with Travellers. She commended the work of the St. Stephen's Green Trust in highlighting and addressing the issues faced by Travellers in prison and their families. She highlighted the benefits that can come about from this work now and into the future for Travellers in prison, their families, the prison, probation and justice systems. Such benefits she said include improved relations inside prisons, reductions in reoffending and much more fundamentally the long-term benefits that accrue from Travellers contributing to society rather than offending against it.



Mags Casey

Mags referred to the discrimination and racism experienced by Travellers within and outside prison and its detrimental impact; *“Travellers have first-hand experience on a day-to-day basis of what discrimination and lack of social acceptance does to a person. The same challenges are faced behind prison walls. But here, they are magnified and concentrated for Traveller prisoners inside a confined space and without the respite afforded by family and the wider community. It is made even more intolerable by the reality for many prisoners of loss of respect or even rejection in some cases by family and community”*. For these reasons, she said, the peer group support work undertaken as part of the TPI is extremely important, providing a space where awareness and self-determination can grow.

Mags extended a particular welcome to Minister Stanton, Michael Donnellan and Vivian Geiran. *“My own experience in the past”, she said, “is of working with very committed individuals in both the prison and probation services. People see the need for change, they realise the benefits that change can bring, and they are personally committed to working for change. Today’s conference, offers an insight into the challenges involved and possible ways of addressing them. I sincerely hope that this provides the impetus for a commitment in the future to bring about the institutional change we all recognise as being necessary”*.



# ADDRESS BY DAVID STANTON

## MINISTER OF STATE FOR EQUALITY, IMMIGRATION AND INTEGRATION

The Minister welcomed participants to the conference and expressed his appreciation for the invitation to provide an address.

He spoke of his own long held interest in and awareness of the many challenges facing the Traveller Community, referring to his role as chair of the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Justice, Defence & Equality which produced its report on the recognition of Traveller Ethnicity in March 2014. He referred also to his role in seeing this issue to conclusion as Minister of State in the Department of Justice and Equality. He noted that; *“Recognition of Traveller ethnicity is an important stepping stone and a marker in Ireland in having a more inclusive society. But on its own, it is not enough to bring about the change needed to help us to deal with the challenges facing the Traveller community. We need sustainable and achievable policies to address these challenges”*. In this regard the Minister referred to the National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy which, he said, should result in a real improvement in the overall quality of life for Travellers.

The Minister referenced the Irish Penal Reform Trust’s 2014 report ‘Travellers in the Irish Prison System: A qualitative study’ noting the significant over representation of Travellers in the Irish prison system. He highlighted too, the over representation of minority ethnic communities in prisons throughout the world including New Zealand where the Māori people comprise approximately 14% of the general population, but 50.8% of the prison population.

The Minister highlighted the five key action areas identified by the Travellers in Prison Initiative (as outlined previously).

He welcomed developments and achievements in the prison and probation services to date which he said, have also had a positive impact on Travellers in prison. He congratulated Michael Donnellan, the Director General

of the Irish Prison Service and Vivian Geiran, Director of the Probation Service on reforms and improvements introduced in recent years. In this regard the Minister referred to; the national roll out of the Community Return Programme. This was an incentivised scheme for earned temporary release under which offenders can be granted structured temporary release in return for supervised community service and Community Support Schemes. These have been set up for shorter sentences in a number of prisons to reduce recidivism rates by arranging for additional support structures and provide for a more structured form of temporary release.



David Stanton, Minister of State for Equality, Immigration and Integration and Sr. Maria McGuinness, Chairperson SSGT

He highlighted rehabilitation and support services, provided by the Irish Prison Service and Probation Service including education, vocational training, healthcare, psychiatric, psychological, counselling, welfare and spiritual services.

He emphasised the central importance of treating prisoners with dignity and respect noting that, *“It is initiatives like this which strengthen supports for families of Travellers in prison, and after prison, using a multi-agency approach, which gives meaning to the concept of being treated with dignity and respect. Giving individuals in prison support, access to services, opportunities for education, health and welfare, are the real things, which can have a profound impact on not only prisoners, but also their families, friends, their communities and society as a whole”*.

He spoke of the importance of the partnership embarked on between, the Irish Prison Service, the Probation Service and civil society organisations working to address the same complex issues. He noted that, *“The active involvement of civil society in our prisons is essential to help the Prison Service achieve their strategic objectives. Groups such as yourselves play a key role in supporting prisoners and ex-prisoners to reintegrate into society, and with the Irish Prison Service engaging actively with you, brings a broad range of expertise, knowledge, resources and experience that may otherwise not be available to them”*.

The Minister concluded by giving his best wishes for the remainder of the conference giving recognition to the wealth of experience, knowledge and expertise present and expressing his desire to receive feedback on information exchanges and the views and perspectives presented.

# ADDRESS BY ANNE COSTELLO

## TRAVELLERS IN PRISON INITIATIVE CO-ORDINATOR

Anne began her address by acknowledging the great support she has received since taking up the position of co-ordinator of the TPI in April 2015 and referred to the 'humanity, commitment and passion' of so many of the people present to improve the situation of Travellers in prison and to reduce the likelihood of them returning to prison.

She expressed gratitude to the SSGT, the Irish Prison Service, the Probation Service and HSE Social Inclusion for funding the initiative and to the team in SSGT for their unrelenting support. She thanked the steering group of the TPI for doing everything in their power to enable her to do her job and offered a sincere thanks to all the speakers at the conference 'for rising to the challenge and overcoming their nerves in order to share their insights and learning'.

Anne gave a background to the Travellers in Prison Initiative noting that its beginnings can be traced back to the report on the experiences of Travellers in prison by the Irish Penal Reform Trust in 2014 which highlighted the challenges being experienced by Travellers. This report was the impetus for a workshop, co-hosted by SSGT and the Irish Travellers Movement to develop a response to the findings resulting in agreement on the need for a special initiative focusing on Travellers in prison.



Anne Costello

SSGT agreed to operate the initiative which would try to bring about changes in policy and practice that would have a positive impact on Travellers in prison.

A Steering Group was established and agreed on key action areas including;

1. Gathering **accurate information** about Travellers in prison through **ethnic data collection** and gathering information about **Traveller women in prison**.
2. **Promoting Travellers access to services**. The ETB with responsibility for the Dublin prisons agreed to pilot an initiative to try to increase Travellers uptake of education services. Teachers in the Dublin prisons have taken on the role of Traveller liaison teachers. They attended training on Traveller inclusion, organised events to celebrate Traveller pride in the prisons and are exploring how to make the curriculum in the schools more relevant to Travellers.
3. Development of a **model of peer-support** that would strengthen Travellers sense of self-identity and advocacy with a specific focus in Wheatfield and Castlereagh.
4. **Family Support** involving piloting the development of resources suited to the needs of Traveller families for community organisations to inform the Family Links Programme being rolled out in the prisons.

Anne noted that an independent 2-year evaluation of the TPI has just been completed. The main thrust of the evaluation she said, is that the TPI has made a significant impact across a range of areas while recognising that a lot of initiatives are still at a very early stage.

There was no doubt, she said, that the approach would not have been possible without the multi-agency approach adopted by the TPI. She noted too that although the TPI was initially intended to be a 3-year project, there is widespread agreement that the work needs to be continued and extended.

The challenges going forward Anne said, include reaching all Travellers in prison by mainstreaming the pilots across the prisons and focussing on post-release supports including employment. Anne concluded by stressing the necessity of addressing the many factors contributing to the over representation of Travellers in the Irish prison system, the need for the state to address these factors and the importance of resourcing Traveller organisations to continue in their struggle for Travellers human rights.



# ADDRESS BY THOMAS McCANN (TRAVELLER COUNSELLING SERVICE)

## THE OVER-REPRESENTATION OF TRAVELLERS IN PRISON AND THE NEED TO ADDRESS THE WIDER SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CONDITIONS

Thomas began by highlighting the long history, traditions, language, culture, values and way of life of Travellers, all affected, he said by rapid economic and social change.

He noted that a survey carried out by the Community Foundation for Ireland in July 2017 found that;

- 77% of Travellers have experienced discrimination in the past year;
- 43% of Travellers indicate they have encountered discrimination while accessing employment;
- 40% of Travellers indicate they or their children have been bullied at school due to their identity;
- 60% of the community indicate that they are not working;
- The average age for finishing school among Travellers is under 15 years.

With regard to Travellers position, status and experience in Irish society Thomas stated; *“As has been shown by numerous reports Travellers are one of the most disadvantaged and marginalised groups in Irish society today, if not the most. As a community, Travellers fare badly on every indicator used to measure disadvantage; unemployment, poverty, social exclusion, health status, infant mortality, life expectancy, illiteracy, formal education and training levels. This background has huge implications for the over representation of Travellers in prison, both men and women”.*



Thomas McCann

Thomas stressed that the racism, exclusion and oppression of Travellers has historical roots involving the states denial of Traveller culture and ethnicity accompanied by its denial of the oppression of Travellers as racism.

*“The dominant discourse”, he said, “was that Travellers were failed settled people who were a problem and needed rehabilitation and assimilation into the majority community” as stated in the 1963 report on Itinerancy; “These terms of reference are comprehensive, and they acknowledge the fact that there can be no final solution of the problems created by itinerants until they are absorbed into the general community” (Commission On itinerancy, 1963)’*

Thomas emphasised the detrimental impact of this discourse on Travellers who he said, have internalised these messages leading them *“to believe there is something wrong with us and that it is our fault that we are somehow responsible for being treated in this way”.* This he said has resulted in low self-esteem, low self-confidence, anxiety, depression (Traveller suicide rates being

7 times that of the settled population) a need to hide one's identity and *"an expectation that we are going to be treated badly and not get a fair deal"*.

He noted too the impact of this discourse on Governments policy and practice including the continued denial of basic human and cultural rights, the lack of culturally appropriate services and poor relationships between the settled and Traveller communities.

Negative stereotypes continue to be reinforced he said, by the media, state agencies and the judiciary whilst barriers to public services persist including; discrimination; internalised oppression; invisibility of Travellers within services and poor relationships between service providers and the Traveller community.

Breaking this cycle Thomas said, requires a range of pre-requisites including; real partnerships; positive respectful and equal relations between the Traveller community, service providers, policy makers and the wider settled community; addressing inequality, discrimination and poverty; culturally appropriate services and the promotion of Traveller culture.

He commended the innovation, imagination and positive results of the projects addressing issues for Travellers in Prison noting too however, the imperative of addressing the wider social and economic conditions affecting Travellers if their over representation in prison is to be addressed. These he said include, high unemployment, educational disadvantage, poor health, bad and over-crowded accommodation, racism and discrimination. Until these are addressed he said, Travellers will continue to be over represented in the prison system and the situation may worsen, *"We need to change the discourse, we need to change the conditions that Travellers have to endure otherwise we will just be addressing the symptoms rather than addressing the causal factors that lead to the over representation of Travellers in prison in the first place"*.

# ADDRESS BY KATHLEEN LAWRENCE

## PAVEE POINT TRAVELLER AND ROMA CENTRE

### PROMOTING TRAVELLER EQUALITY IN PRISON THROUGH ETHNIC DATA COLLECTION AND MONITORING

Kathleen began by referring to the recognition of Traveller ethnicity by the Irish Government on March 1st 2017, expressing that for her as a Traveller woman, *“it was a monumental day and while it may not seem like a big deal in terms of other people, as a Traveller woman it was very important for your state to actually turn around and recognise what you’ve known all along”*.

Kathleen introduced Pavee Point Traveller and Roma Centre whose aim is to ‘contribute to improvement in the quality of life, living circumstances, status and participation of Travellers and Roma through working innovatively for social



Kathleen Lawrence

justice, greater solidarity, development, equality and human rights’. Pavee Point was established in 1985, committed to the realisation of human rights for Travellers and Roma in Ireland. It is a partnership of Travellers, Roma and members of the majority population, representing Traveller and Roma issues at local, national and international levels, operating programmes on health, violence against women, drugs and alcohol and Roma inclusion and is recognised nationally and internationally for its expertise on ethnic equality monitoring. (Kathleen noted the closure of Education, Youth, Media and Communications programmes within Pavee Point due to lack of funding and resources).

She stated that in Ireland, the agencies currently collecting ethnic data are;

- Irish Prison Service (IPS)
- Central Statistics Office (CSO)
- Primary and secondary schools
- Universities and the Higher Education Authority (HEA)
- Hospitals/HSE (incl. maternity units, children’s hospitals and psychiatric units)
- National Drug Treatment Reporting System (NDTRS)
- Health Protection Surveillance Centre (HPSC)
- Pobal (SICAP/Tús)
- Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS)
- Homeless services

From a legal perspective Kathleen highlighted that the collection of ethnic data is legal under Irish and European data protection laws as long as the following data protection principles are respected:

- Universal question

- Informed consent
- Voluntary self-identification (\*self-ascribed)
- Information is accurate and only used for the purpose for which is it collected
- Information is kept confidential and anonymous, so individuals are not identified (aggregated)

In relation to ethnic data and human rights she highlighted that UN treaty-monitoring bodies, European institutions, national/international equality and human rights bodies, MEG/Migrant NGOs and Traveller/Roma organisations support the collection, analysis and use of ethnic data once the national data protection legislation is adhered to and the following human rights principles are respected:

- Universal question
- Informed consent
- Voluntary self-identification (self-ascribed)
- Disaggregated data is available in a timely manner
- Ongoing monitoring and analyses of data used to design interventions and inclusive policies, promoting equality of access, participation and outcome for minority ethnic groups
- Evaluation of interventions and policies in consultation with key stakeholders and organisations representing minority ethnic groups

Kathleen presented the amended Irish Prison Service and national census question on ethnicity noting that the IPS have agreed to rollout the amended question before the end of 2017;

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

**A White**

1  Irish

2  Irish Traveller

3  Any other White background

**B Black or Black Irish**

4  African

5  Any other Black background

**C Asian or Asian Irish**

6  Chinese

7  Any other Asian background

**D Other, including mixed background**

8  Other, write in description

<input type="checkbox"/>							
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She stated that in recognition of the challenges of ethnic data collection, Pavee Point has worked collaboratively with TPI/IPS to develop the knowledge and understanding of prison staff of: ethnic data, ethnic identifiers and ethnic equality monitoring; relevance of collecting and using ethnic data in prisons; challenges and sensitivities in collecting ethnic data and understanding of how to apply ethnic equality monitoring in prisons within a human rights framework.

Kathleen highlighted that in preparation for the rollout of the new ethnic question and in developing staff confidence in collecting, analysing and using ethnic data, Pavee Point has provided IPS with the following support including; promoting voluntary self-identification amongst prisoners; awareness raising amongst staff and prisoners; interactive training for staff and developing practical resources for staff and prisoners.

# ADDRESS BY BRIDGET KELLY (NATIONAL TRAVELLER WOMEN'S FORUM)

## PRESENTATION ON 'HEARING THEIR VOICES - TRAVELLER WOMEN IN PRISON' RESEARCH REPORT

Bridget presented the recently published TPI Traveller Women in Prison research. She noted that while the IPRT report gives us some insight into Traveller women's experience of prison, there hasn't ever before been any specific research conducted on the experiences of Traveller women in prison.

The TPI, she said, commissioned Rachel Doyle to interview 12 Traveller women in Dochas and Limerick prison to find out more about their pathways into prison and experiences within the prison system. The women interviewed ranged in age from 23 - 59 years of age. All, she said were mothers and came from different parts of Ireland.

Nine of the women interviewed, she said, reported experiencing domestic violence and in terms of reasons for their sentences, nine women were in prison for shoplifting/theft, four for assault/GBH, two for a driving offence and one for a drugs offence. A number of the women, she said, were in prison for a combination of crimes.



Bridget Kelly

The All Ireland Traveller Health Study, Bridget said, found that *'based on the Irish Prison Service estimate of Traveller prisoners, the risk of a Traveller woman being imprisoned was 22 times that of non-Traveller women'*.

The TPI report 'Hearing their Voices - Traveller women in prison?' seeks, she said, to give a voice to those women.

Bridget explained that a group of Traveller women were recorded reading quotes from the women in the research and that these recordings would be played during her presentation, *"because the women are not here to-day, we thought that it was important that Traveller women in the community would act as their voices"*. She thanked the women who volunteered to be recorded for their sensitivity in doing so.

She followed this introduction by providing some context to the main findings in the report and followed each theme by playing the recordings of the women talking about their experiences.

### DISCRIMINATION

The research showed that there were issues with non-Traveller inmates calling the Traveller

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2 Available at [www.ssgt.ie/resources](http://www.ssgt.ie/resources)

women names. This type of racist name calling and behaviour by other women has a very serious effect on their self-esteem and confidence.

## STIGMA (FAMILY AND COMMUNITY)

Another aspect of the reality for Traveller women in prison is the stigma associated with being in prison as a Traveller woman. A number of the women interviewed highlighted the fact that being in prison is viewed differently in the Traveller community for women than for men, and that expectations in the community for women to fulfil their roles as carers, mothers, daughters and sisters were much greater than the expectations placed on men to fulfil assigned roles.

## CHILDREN

The majority of the women interviewed had family looking after their children. None of the children concerned were being cared for by their father. This was for reasons of domestic violence, drug use/addiction, and imprisonment. For those with family members caring for their children, the security of knowing who was minding them, that they were being well looked after and having family help was hugely important. They also felt guilty about this and felt that their parents and other family members who were looking after their children need to be supported.

## DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Most of the women interviewed had experienced violence from a current or previous partner. Experiences of refuges varied but the importance of ensuring that women who understood and had experience of working with Travellers are employed in refuges was highlighted. Refuge staff understanding of Traveller culture and the particular difficulties associated with leaving an abusive relationship within the community was considered to be very important; for example, the difficulties of living on a site and trying to get a barring order, getting access to information about services and rights, the expectations of the family and the community about women's role as a wife and the mistrust of people in positions of authority (including the legal system, Gardaí, social workers and sometimes GPs).

## SERVICES IN PRISON

For most, the prison experience was not always seen as negative. The majority were engaged in some form of educational activity which they saw as crucial to their mental health, personal and educational development. The need for Travellers to be employed within the prison system itself, was raised by Traveller organisation representatives, who highlighted the importance of breaking down barriers, equalising relationships and promoting positive role models and perceptions about Travellers. This point was reiterated by Traveller women themselves who noted that the employment of Traveller teachers would build the confidence of Traveller women to take part in classes.

## MAKING COMPLAINTS

When asked about the complaints system in the prison and whether the women interviewed would know how to put in a complaint or feel comfortable in doing so there was a mixed response. A number of participants stated that they either didn't know how to put in a complaint or had fears that making a complaint would make matters worse for them. The fact that complaints are put in writing may also present barriers for Traveller women who don't have literacy skills.

## ILLEGAL DRUG USE

Eleven of the women interviewed had experience of drug use. For those interviewed, drug taking was linked to a range of factors. Two of the women interviewed said they started taking drugs

in prison, three stated that they started taking drugs as a result of domestic violence, three as a result of partner drug use and three as a result of bereavement. Many of the women interviewed discussed the importance of treatment programmes and one-to-one support in looking to the future and spoke about their desire and commitment to get help and improve their life chances.

## HEALTH AND MENTAL HEALTH

Poor mental health was identified as being a significant factor in the lives of the women, linked to domestic violence, drug use, the availability of drugs in prison, discrimination (in and outside of prison), name calling in prison and being away from family. The importance of rehabilitation, counselling and support in prison was highlighted to prepare women for life after prison and to deal with past problems and current issues.

## EXPERIENCES WITH THE GARDAÍ

Many of the women had negative experiences with the Gardaí before their conviction. A number of women expressed serious problems with treatment by the Gardaí, including abusive, discriminatory and racist language and violence.

## POST- RELEASE

As mentioned many of the women were very concerned about what would happen when they leave prison. Women expressed concerns about the need for planning for release, secure accommodation, drug rehabilitation, re-establishing relationships with the community, accessing work and training and a life free from domestic violence.

The next stage with this research, Bridget stated is ensuring the recommendations are acted on. To this end an advisory group has been set up by the TPI, it has met twice in the Dochas centre with all stakeholders including 2 Traveller women prisoners.

# ADDRESS BY BRIGID CONNORS

## PERSONAL TESTIMONY

Brigid introduced herself as a member of the Traveller community and as a recovering heroin addict. She addressed the conference to share her experiences as a Traveller woman, of addiction and of going through the prison system a number of times before eventually entering the Coolmine Women's Residential Programme at Ashleigh House.



Bridget Connors and Michael Donnellan

Brigid described her journey to addiction starting with prescribed medication for minor depression and moving quickly, following the sudden and untimely death of her father due to cancer, to crack cocaine and heroin.

Brigid's partner went to prison in 2015 and Brigid stated, *"I gave up living at that stage"*. Brigid herself ended up in prison but said she did not admit to herself that she had a serious problem for some time. Eventually she sought and received counselling in the Dóchas Centre. The queues for counselling she said, were extremely long with just 2 counsellors to deal with 120 - 130 women.

Brigid was released from prison in April 2016 and had a serious relapse. She was sentenced to prison again which was in many ways she said, a reprieve for her, *"I eventually got back to the Dóchas Centre. I was very happy to get back to the Dóchas Centre because it was a safe place, I was safe there"*.

She sought information on the Ashleigh House programme but found that this information was not easily accessible and had to ask a number of staff members to help her. She was granted temporary release in November 2016 and went to Ashleigh House, the only residential treatment centre for women in the country. Brigid expressed her gratitude to the IPS for their support and belief in her ability to make changes in her life.

With regard to her experience of the programme Brigid noted, *"to be honest prison is easier than residential treatment and women need to know that. There needs to be more information. It's very hard because you actually have to look at the person that you were.... you have to make a new life around everything"*.

Today however, Brigid said she is happy, proud to say that she is in recovery and in regular contact with her wider family and with her children whom, she said, she had lost. For the first time in her life, Brigid said, she is starting a job on a Community Employment Scheme recalling that just 12 months ago she was on methadone detox in Mountjoy.

In her address, Brigid called for additional supports for Traveller women in prison because as

she said *“you have to be very strong to admit to someone outside your culture that you’re actually addicted to a substance. When people look at a Traveller woman in the Dóchas Centre they think she’s strong but we’re not strong we’re broken inside.”*

Specifically, she called for; additional and targeted information for Traveller women about residential treatment programmes; pre-entry and graduate groups within the prison and support workers assigned to each woman prior to release to link her with services and supports in relation to domestic violence, housing, addiction and financial concerns. Women, she said are now released with no supports, especially in areas with no Traveller support groups or backup in particular outside Dublin.

Education too, Brigid noted is a huge concern especially for older Traveller women who may not have literacy skills and have huge shame associated with this. She thanked the English teacher in the Dóchas Centre for her excellent work and her passion for the Traveller community.

She concluded, highlighting the particular hardships for mothers and the impact of separation from their children on women’s mental and emotional health;

*“Nearly every Traveller woman in the Dóchas Centre and in Limerick Prison is a mother, does have children on the outside. There’s nobody realises the hurt you have in your heart when you’re locked up at half seven every night and you’ve nothing to think about except your children. At the end of the day that breaks your heart. And it takes a very strong woman to actually not think about suicide and depression in that place. There’s big supports needed for Traveller women in that community. I just hope to God that what I said here today can make a difference to people”.*

# PERSONAL TESTIMONY OF A TRAVELLER MAN IN PRISON

## PRESENTED BY JOHN PAUL COLLINS

John Paul Collins provided a brief presentation on behalf of William, a Traveller man in prison who has been engaged in a project with Pavee Point and Mountjoy Prison to raise awareness about and to challenge the issues of feuding and violence amongst young Travellers. William facilitated a 12 week training programme with John Paul Collins and Fiona Nally from Pavee Point. Twelve men started the programme. The training took place in both Mountjoy Prison and Pavee Point. The course content was informed by a handbook 'We Can Sort It Out' produced by Pavee Point and by William's own personal experience of feuding resulting in imprisonment. William talked about his hope to deter other young Traveller men from making the terrible mistake he made and thanked Governor Murphy for supporting the initiative.

The purpose of the 'Feuding Deterrence Programme' was to develop a space for young Traveller men to voice their concerns about conflict in the community and to challenge the pressures that young men experience to engage in conflict 'due to the family name'. Participants had the opportunity to acquire the knowledge, confidence and skills to handle the undue pressure to engage in conflict.

He described the range of topics covered throughout the programme, including:

- A better understanding of the law in relation to 'joint enterprise' whereby all involved in a crime can be convicted regardless of their level of involvement
- Responses to conflict - the merits and drawbacks of traditional ways of dealing with conflict including 'fist fighting' and how this can lead to further violence
- Social Media and its impacts on feuding
- Mediation as a tool to resolve conflict.

A range of speakers were invited to meet with the group of young men including:

- Traveller Mediation Service
- Care After Prison
- Travellers in Prison Initiative
- Governor Murphy from Mountjoy Prison.

Michael Donnellan, Director General of the Prison Service was invited to present certificates to the ten participants who completed the course.

John Paul then shared Williams's insights into the importance of education stating; *'It's only when we work together to educate young Traveller men that we will be able to resolve the issues of feuding within our community. Education is key to challenging, changing and reducing inequalities'*.

He acknowledged the great teachers in Mountjoy who taught him to read and write and supported his engagement in a number of initiatives in the prison including as a volunteer with the Irish Red Cross, with the Samaritans as a listener and his involvement with the Toast Masters which gave him the confidence and skills to deliver a well-structured speech.

He talked about his opportunity to complete an access module in Open University and his hopes to go on to 3<sup>rd</sup> level education some-day. He concluded that *'none of this would have been possible without the wonderful teachers in Mountjoy'*.

He thanked Governor Brian Murphy and staff at Mountjoy Prison for facilitating him to work with Pavee Point in developing and delivering the first Feuding Deterrence Programme and the young men for their open and honest engagement in the project. He acknowledged the work that Traveller organisations are doing with prisoners which has far-reaching effects for both the Traveller and settled community.

He concluded by saying *'this work needs to be supported both practically and financially in order to prevent the pointless cycle of violence. All resources need to be utilised to educate young people about the dangers of feuding'*.



# ADDRESS BY MICHAEL MC DONAGH

## PRISON PEER SUPPORT

Michael began his presentation with an introduction in Shelta acknowledging the importance of the Traveller language within Traveller culture. His presentation focussed on the Peer Support Programme in Wheatfield prison (being run by Meath Travellers Workshops), which creates a space for Traveller men to come together as Travellers to discuss, share and develop projects together.



Michael Mc Donagh

Michael highlighted the importance of this work in addressing the internalised oppression of Travellers (spoken of earlier); *“We as Travellers have internalised that oppression and it manifests itself in many ways and in one of the ways that it does it we have what I would call an inferiority complex, everyone can do better than us...the message to try to get that across to people is that that’s not true.”* This Michael noted is no easy task given the historical understanding and experiences of Travellers as being outside of society and outside of mainstream professions.

The main aim of the Peer Support Programme Michael said, is to encourage and support Traveller men in Wheatfield to engage with the services that already exist in the prison. He noted that whilst the development of new services for Travellers in the prison is not necessarily required, what is required is that existing services are altered, to better reflect the experiences and meet the different needs of Travellers. The Peer Support Programme, he said, provided training on Traveller experiences, lives and Traveller culture to prison officers and other staff whose excellent work he commended.

Michael emphasised the importance for peer group members, of having a Traveller led programme. *“Travellers in this situation,”* he said *“are not used to seeing other Travellers as role models or leaders in this area. The norm is, he said, for settled people to do this work but for Travellers, the experience of being with and talking to Travellers who are leading the process is an extremely important one.”*

Michael spoke of the importance of recruiting Travellers as staff in the prison system and the challenges associated with this. Referring to his own experience of visiting and working in Wheatfield Prison he said *“I remember the first day I went in and lo and behold I met an officer who was a cousin of mine and also I met a cousin of mine at the other side of the bars and I said, ‘this is going to be really interesting’. Here I had family on both sides of the bars and how was I going to deal with that. He (the prison officer) kept a low profile and I can understand why...because it is difficult for a Traveller to be a prison officer and express that...prejudice and racism exist... One thing that I think would be brilliant in the future is if we have Traveller men and Traveller women*

*working in the prison system, why not? It's already started, let's do it. I'm very fortunate to say that my grandson is now really aiming in that direction".*

He spoke of *"the importance for Travellers of seeing real change and progress for Travellers as opposed to simply talking about it. They must be able to 'see, touch and understand it.... let Travellers see other Travellers doing it"*. He referred to advances in education and to the Travellers now undertaking degree programmes and PHDs but noted that much work still needs to be done in this regard.

Referring to the potential and hopefully future roll out of Peer Support Programmes for Travellers in the prison system, Michael stated that while this roll out is important in itself, the manner in which the programmes are designed and run is equally important. Being Traveller led he said, is an essential aspect if the message that it is the job of settled people to do this work is to be avoided. Training for Travellers to do this work he said, should and could be provided.

Michael concluded by acknowledging the support of the St. Stephen's Green Trust and the IPS and urged the IPS to mainstream and roll out the programme in prisons throughout country, following the completion of the external evaluation currently being undertaken.

# ADDRESS BY ELLEN MC DONAGH

## PRISON PEER SUPPORT

Ellen's presentation also focussed on the Prison Links Peer Support Programme being operated in Wheatfield Prison. She noted that she, like many other women, has visited relatives in all prisons throughout Ireland be it as political prisoners or other types of prisoners. It is of vital importance she said, to remember the human side and holistic effect of the prison service on entire families; *"I've seen young women hand over brand new babies for the first time to men on the other side...I've seen little children running in and out to see their Daddys and to see their Mammys, the affect it has had on me as a person has been horrific"*. She spoke of the discussions within Meath Travellers Workshops on the need to develop supports for Traveller men and Traveller women in prison.



Ellen Mc Donagh

Meath Travellers Workshops, she said approached Wheatfield Prison and were given an enthusiastic, welcoming response and huge support from the management and staff of the prison, *"All of the people that we met really and truly had the interests of the men at heart. We worked as part of a team... because you cannot do this work in isolation"*.

Ellen described the establishment of a Traveller men's group in the prison which included men of all ages, many of whom are now availing of prison supports and education services. The programme is in its fourth year and she said, has involved huge learning for everyone concerned. All suggestions and ideas, she said, are met with open arms from the inmates and from the prison authorities alike. The men involved she said have continuously used the phrase *"They can lock the locks but they can't stop the clocks"*. Ellen said that now is the time to bring about change for the families living with loneliness and hardship at home and for the men in prison living with guilt and the effect of their actions on their families.

Ellen concluded by expressing her gratitude to the IPS, Wheatfield Prison and the St. Stephens Green Trust for their involvement and support.

# ADDRESS BY CHRIS MC DONAGH

## TRAVELLER MEDIATION SERVICE

Chris McDonagh has been working with the Traveller Mediation Service for 3 years. He referred to the beginning of the project to deliver peer mediation training to Travellers in Castlerea Prison; *“When it was discussed about doing peer mediation training in prison I wasn’t too sure about this or what it would look like. But on my first visit to Castlerea prison ‘school’ I was impressed by the posters on the walls of the red cross room filled with thoughtful reflections on the effects of violence and ways to manage anger and reduce conflict”*. After some discussion with Castlerea staff and management, TMS agreed to develop a peer mediation programme on a pilot basis.



Chris Mc Donagh

This was the first Traveller Mediation Programme in a prison setting. Key elements of the programme included the involvement in the delivery of the course of two teachers who had been delivering the Red Cross Conflict Awareness Programme and the inclusion of a focus on Traveller culture. It was important Chris said, that all those involved recognised that they were embarking on new and uncharted territory together.

From the beginning, Chris stated, the students engaged wholeheartedly, with a desire to contribute to reducing conflict and improving relationships within the prison environment. Chris described the group sessions undertaken:

Session 1 involved discussion on conflict in prison. Most of the group agreed that disputes can arise from the small incidents or misunderstandings and that the impact of conflict can be particularly difficult, when issues from the outside including family issues are carried into prison.

In the weeks that followed, areas covered included:

- The meaning of conflict and its impact
- Listening and communication exercises
- Personal responses to conflict
- How conflict escalates and conflict de-escalation techniques
- Group work on the nature of conflict and its impact and consequences
- The stages of the mediation process
- Appropriate and inappropriate referrals (e.g. criminality or breaches of prison discipline could not be dealt with)
- The process of deciding who will mediate, how many mediators are needed etc.

Reasons the men gave for their participation:

- I want to make jail a safer place
- I want to be able to develop skills and bring them back to my community.

Their feedback on the programme:

- It has changed my view in that things can be talked out instead of conflict...I look at in a different light now
- We were able to prevent trouble starting on the inside and escalating to the outside.

At the end of this programme, he said, some of the men expressed an interest in undertaking more advanced training and the programme was therefore extended for a further four weeks.

An independent mediator (accredited by the Mediators Institute of Ireland) then assessed the competencies of the peer mediators to determine the readiness of the participants to start the delivery of peer mediation in the prison.

## THE EVALUATION REPORT

An evaluation of the programme funded through the TPI concluded that turnover of prisoners means that there is a need for ongoing programme development. The presence of 4 mediators is likely to be sufficient, but a succession strategy is required to ensure that the responsibility is shared and not overly burdensome.

The report recommended:

1. That support and implementation of the programme into the future requires;
  - a. Weekly group meetings to review cases and debriefing with the Chaplain and teachers
  - b. Monthly or six weekly meeting of the advisory group
  - c. Monitoring and documenting the type and outcome of disputes on an anonymous basis.
2. A Traveller led cultural element should be incorporated into future peer mediation training programmes.
3. Following implementation and review, the programme should be rolled out within the prison involving;
  - a. Consideration of developing a short film/DVD for broadcast on the prison's TV channel
  - b. Peer mediation induction workshops for prison staff to encourage support and buy-in
  - c. Exploration of options where peer mediators could provide orientation or information to new prisoners.
4. The outcomes and impacts of the programme on the wider prison community should be captured in time, as more groups of peer mediators are trained.
5. A programme for implementing the peer mediation programme across the prison service, as a whole, should be considered and resourced.
6. The programme should be run on an ongoing basis with support from school staff and the TMS.
7. Prison staff suggested that peer mediation should be a follow-on to the Red Cross conflict awareness programme, on an ongoing basis.
8. The role of the advisory group, composed of representatives from Prison management, the TMS, ETB staff, TPI, Pastoral Care and others will be critical in sustaining the momentum for this programme.
9. Consideration could be given to developing a post-release Mediation & Conflict Skills training programme.

Chris highlighted the contribution to the programme of two Traveller men, Hughie Nevin and Frank Kavanagh who were in the process of completing the Traveller Mediation & Conflict Training accredited programme in Maynooth. He thanked Tanya Lalor for her work in carrying out the evaluation of the pilot programme.

# ADDRESS BY FRANK KAVANAGH

## TRAVELLER MEDIATION SERVICE

Frank introduced himself as a men's health worker in Offaly Traveller Movement and a mediator with the Traveller Mediation Service. He completed the Traveller Mediation and Conflict Training, accredited by the Mediators Institute of Ireland, and delivered in partnership with the Edward Kennedy Institute in Maynooth University.



Frank Kavanagh

This training, Frank said, was the first of its kind specifically geared towards Travellers. The aim of the course is to encourage and

support Traveller men and women to engage in training and education on conflict and disputes with a view to working with members of the Traveller community.

Frank said that through his work he has seen the benefits of having Traveller Mediators working in their own community.

Following the training Frank, along with Hughie Nevin, was afforded the opportunity to take part in the evaluation and facilitation of the Peer Mediation Training in the school in Castlerea Prison. His role was to engage with the men's group in the prison at the beginning of the training and at the end to get their views on the content and practicalities of the course.

*"When I met the men, I didn't know what to expect as this was my first time to do anything like this, but from the start the men were very open and comfortable with myself and Hughie".*

Frank described the sessions which were undertaken including in session 1, a discussion on peer mediation and conflict and on the men's expectations of the Programme. Discussion also focussed he said, on some of the situations and issues that have caused conflict for them, inside and outside of prison, and their experience of handling such conflict. The men expressed a desire to develop their understanding of how to mediate conflict situations, and to manage conflict without the use of violence.

The last session focussed on the men's learning from the programme and their likes and dislikes. Again, Frank said, group members were very open and honest about the programme and what they learned from it. They talked about the value of learning the listening and communication skills of mediation, and practising the different stages of the mediation process through role plays. They also talked about wanting to further develop their mediation skills, to practice and use in family and community settings after their release.

Frank highlighted the key points arising from the review discussion including that:

- The group very much enjoyed the training, and many didn't want to see it end. They expressed an interest in continuing to upskill and learn more upon their release.
- One of the highlights for the group was the fact that it was delivered by Travellers to Travellers... Those who co-delivered the training are trained mediators from within the Traveller community. This is a fundamental aspect for the delivery and success of this programme, as it shows that Travellers can, and are willing to engage in education, employment opportunities and given the chance, to work with and support members of their own community.
- The group recognised the benefits of this training providing them with the skills and confidence to intervene in many situations.



# ADDRESS BY MICHAEL DONNELLAN

## DIRECTOR GENERAL IRISH PRISON SERVICE

Michael expressed his appreciation at being invited to the TPI conference and began by noting that throughout the world, 10 million people woke up in prisons that morning, 3,621 of them in Ireland. He stressed the need to reduce this very large number and the need to do so in a holistic way.



Michael Donnellan

He referred to and commended the publication in 2014 of the Irish Penal Reform Trust's report on Travellers in prison. He noted that following its publication, the St. Stephen's Green Trust took

the initiative and took action to address the issues raised by encouraging and urging the Irish Prison Service to effect change, *"They pushed us and they pulled us into it, and that has to happen"*, he said, *"Change is always about pushing and pulling and nudging forward all the time because no one group can do everything. No one agency can do everything"*.

Michael highlighted that at that time the IPS had a significant and challenging agenda including addressing issues related to slopping out, violence and drugs within the prison system. He stressed that given competing agendas and challenges there is a very real need for external supports and partnerships at community level. He stressed too, the fundamental importance of the partnership between the IPS and the SSGT Travellers in Prison Initiative, *"I'm delighted that over the past number of years there's been a real recognition that prison is community and community is prison and that we have to stop this divide, and your intervention is so helpful and so engaging"*.

The TPI Michael said, has been a fantastic catalyst on key issues, and has played a crucial leadership, co-ordination and developmental role in highlighting and addressing the needs of Travellers in prison. He highlighted, in particular, the appointment and role of the TPI project coordinator Anne Costello and noted some key developments including;

- **The forthcoming adoption and promotion of the ethnic identifier** in prisons throughout Ireland based on the census question, which he said will be in place by the end of 2017. Michael cautioned, that the first hour in prison is an extremely daunting time for prisoners who can find answering a wide range of questions extremely difficult. However, he said that an education campaign is being put in place for all prison staff raising awareness as to why this question is so important and providing training to staff on how to ask the question in a sensitive way. The fears and concerns of prison staff that they may make a mistake or 'put their foot in it', he said must be recognised and addressed. The ethnic identifier question he said, will be first tested in Castlerea and in Dóchas.
- **A national prison census** which will be carried out in the first half of 2018 whereby the number of prisoners will be counted on a given day and night and of those prisoners, the number of

those who identify as Travellers will also be counted. Accurate data Michael noted, is a necessary pre - requisite to influence change.

- **The recently published 'Hearing our Voices - Traveller Women in Prison'** report produced by the TPI. Michael urged those present to read in full, the testimonies of the women contained therein. The report, he said presents challenges and criticisms which need to be heard and which provide a chance and a pathway to begin to make necessary changes, *"I certainly think that the Traveller women's project really highlights the phenomenal problem that we have in Irish society about how we incarcerate women in particular, allegedly for their own safety... it's not good enough and we have to out it, you have to out it. We have to have a conversation about how we do that"*.
- **Developments in education** including the appointment of Traveller liaison teachers.
- **Outreach work** from Castlerea prison whereby the psychology service is working with Traveller families in Galway who have a male Traveller in prison which it is hoped will lead to a greater take up of services including psychology services by Traveller men in Castlerea and post-release.
- **Peer support work.** Commenting on this work Michael stated, *"I cannot emphasise the benefit of people taking their own power back and taking control of their direction and their future. Professionals alone, cannot change people lives, this can only happen when people are supported to take control of their own lives"*.
- **Traveller Mediation Service.** This work Michael said, *"is powerful as Traveller men are helping Traveller men to talk about difficult and stressful issues, harmful things they have done and would like to undo"*. This kind of programme and the Red Cross Initiative in the prison service he said has involved handing over power and control to allow people to start self-regulating. This, he emphasised is possible in a prison environment and requires further focus and attention by the prison service.

Michael highlighted the importance of recognition of Traveller ethnicity by the state as providing a strong foundation for the future. He too, stressed the importance of mainstreaming and of on-going partnership and collaborative working; *"It's obvious that this has to be mainstreamed"*, he said, *"...but it's so important that outside groups continue to maintain interest and to maintain a controlling interest in the development of the future of prisons. You cannot leave it all to us .....it's very important that we move together"*.

# ADDRESS BY VIVIAN GEIRAN

## PROBATION SERVICE DIRECTOR

Vivian thanked the St. Stephen's Green Trust and the Travellers in Prison Initiative for the invitation to speak at the conference and welcomed the opportunity to partner with Irish Prison Service colleagues, and the St. Stephen's Green Trust, in establishing and funding the Travellers in Prison Initiative. He thanked all involved for their work on the initiative including Probation Service staff.



Vivian Geiran

He commended the excellent presentations and personal testimonies at the conference which highlighted the impact of

imprisonment and the criminal justice system on Travellers. *“The issue and the voice of Travellers in the criminal justice system”*, he said, *“had been, and has been, neglected for too long. That is why the Travellers in Prison Initiative is so important”*.

The Travellers in Prison Initiative and the conference itself, he said, have provided an important opportunity for the criminal justice system to reflect on the good practice being undertaken and improvements needed. He highlighted the publication in 2014 of the Irish Penal Reform Trust report on Travellers in the criminal justice system as an important catalyst for the establishment of the Travellers in Prison Initiative and noted that in the same year, the Irish Probation Journal published an article on probation practice with Travellers in Ireland by Professor Denis Bracken of the University of Manitoba, Winnipeg, Canada.

The article highlighted the overrepresentation of minority groups in the criminal justice system calling for more accurate data collection. Key challenges identified, included managing compliance and risk assessment, as well as cultural awareness in probation work. The article concluded that while Travellers held some level of suspicion of the Probation Service (as part of the criminal justice system), those interviewed had generally had good experiences of probation, their supervisors, and in particular of community service. The article concluded that Probation Officers had much experience on which to draw, that they had a good understanding in general of culture and discrimination, but that Travellers on probation had mixed views of the Service.

Vivian noted that based on these findings and the IPRT 2014 report, new ethnicity data fields were introduced on the Case Tracking system in 2016 and that data from the Probation Service Case Tracking system, incorporating the ethnic identifier category, show that 9.9% of persons engaged with the Probation Service are Travellers.

He pointed to the challenges still posed by accurate data collection but noted that *‘to understand any situation, we need to have accurate data’*.

He identified some of the key responsibilities of the Irish Prison Service and Probation Service under The National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy 2017-2021 including, to improve access to the services in prison and working towards better community links and preparation for release and to prevent discrimination.

The future will see continued interagency co-operation, he said, to improve service delivery, building on the Traveller in Prison Initiative and in keeping with the Probation Services Public Sector Duty under the Human Rights and Equality Act 2014, to eliminate discrimination and to uphold human rights.

In terms of priorities Vivian highlighted the importance of; cultural competency training for staff; reviewing other aspects of practice; more research; improved data; and the Probation Service to be a trusted provider of services to all including Travellers through the further development of the organisations cultural competence and the engagement of Travellers in taking this work forward. Vivian concluded by expressing his commitment to continued collaboration with all partners and to mainstreaming learning and action.

*“2014 was a time for one wakeup call, for the reasons I already mentioned. 2017 is now the occasion of another wakeup call - not just for the recognition of Traveller ethnicity by the Government earlier this year, but also for what positive actions will result from this conference and the Travellers in Prison Initiative generally”.*

# MUSICAL FINALE

The conference concluded with a music session featuring the famous uilleannn piper Paddy Keenan accompanied by Daoiri Farrell on bouzouki, Tara Finn on whistle and John Keenan on banjo.

The conference organisers and participants were particularly glad to welcome Paddy, a member of the Traveller community who has made a significant contribution to traditional music in Ireland and throughout the world. A founding member of the Bothy Band, Paddy began playing at the age of 10 and played his first major concert at the Gaiety Theatre, Dublin, when he was just 14.

His contributions to traditional Irish music were honoured in 2002, when he received the TG4 Gradam Ceoil Musician of the Year award, which is presented to musical heroes of the modern age, and in 2011 by the Irish Music Association, with a Lifetime Achievement Award.

One of the pieces performed on the day was The Blue Tar Road - written by Liam Weldon, Paddy said, it depicts “a famous Travellers peaceful protest that took place in Lansdowne valley, near Cherry Orchard in Dublin in 1959. It tells of how the council came along and moved the Travellers on and as they travelled in the night they could see the reflection of the moon on the tarred road, emitting a kind of blue reflection, hence the name of the song, the blue tar road”.



# FEEDBACK FROM TABLE DISCUSSIONS

The following outlines some of the key points raised by conference participants at roundtable discussions following the conference presentations.

## APPROACH

- A human rights approach is needed
- There is a need to focus on wider determinants and causal factors - There is a shift in the IPS regarding recognising causal factors
- Wider societal change is required
- Underlying factors for over-representation must be addressed
- Co-ordination of the work is critical
- Great work is taking place - funding is needed to mainstream initiatives
- Recognition of challenges is needed including the complexity of issues and that there are no quick fixes
- There is a need to take account of pathways to prison and the context of oppression, discrimination and disadvantage, the impact of “internalisation of oppression” and the low self-esteem and mental health issues that ensue
- Low self-esteem and disadvantage are a justification for specific initiatives focused on Traveller prisoners
- There is a need for “cultural safety” - making employers responsible for challenging and ending discrimination and racism in language, name-calling, etc. whether by prisoners or staff.

## THE ETHNIC IDENTIFIER

- Identifying as an ethnic group is positive as Travellers unique identity is recognised
- Ethnic data collection and monitoring is hugely important
- The positive and important use of the ethnic identifier question in the service needs to be utilised across the board in the IPS
- Travellers can be reluctant to self-identify as they are very vulnerable at committal stage
- The first stages of the committal process can be disorientating, so the question may need to be asked again at a later date, when the prisoner is settled into prison life
- The need for reliable information is paramount
- There is a need to gather information about the number of Travellers on protection
- It is extremely important that questions re ethnicity are posed in a way that Travellers understand.

## TRAVELLER PROGRAMMES WITHIN THE PRISON SYSTEM

- It was noted that resources are now being put into Traveller prison programmes such as the TPI and it was also noted that the conference was at capacity and that the interest in such initiatives is finally being recognised
- Teacher hours (education units closing like secondary schools) are not appropriately organised in prisons. The Education unit needs to be resourced year-round
- There is now a Travellers advisory group in the Dóchas Centre
- Research should be undertaken on how Travellers experience prison - how it differs from settled prisoners.

## THE OVER-REPRESENTATION OF TRAVELLERS IN IRISH PRISONS

- Some attendees were shocked at the over-representation of Travellers within the Irish prison system, i.e. 10% of male and 22% of female prisoners in Irish prisons are Travellers
- It was noted that there are similar challenges in the criminal justice system in the UK with over-representation of Travellers.

## PRISON AND POST-RELEASE SUPPORTS

- It was noted that life inside prison is very different to life on the outside - 'prison is a completely different world'
- Systems in prison are under-resourced
- There are a range of post-release challenges including the need for addiction and counselling supports
- Supports are needed when people are leaving prison
- Supports and resources are needed for Travellers that identify as LGBT within the prison system
- The complaints system in prison is not transparent and does not properly support vulnerable prisoners
- Trained Traveller mediators are now going into Irish prisons. They bring much needed support and hope to Travellers leaving prison
- 'Wrap around services' are required for when people leave prisons, i.e. pre-release support worker is linked with prisoners to help sourcing work and addiction services and the need for through-care and resettlement plans and actions
- The 'stigma' of imprisonment for Travellers was also identified as requiring supports.

## TRAVELLER WOMEN IN PRISON

- Will the Traveller Women in Prison research be acted on?
- The initiative and the research provide an opportunity to invest in women in prison
- There is a need for greater understanding and awareness in refuges of issues for Traveller women
- Within the Traveller Community, there is a lot of judgement of women going to prison - it can be viewed that you have 'failed as a wife/mother'
- The impact on Traveller women going to prison can be very difficult and challenging for their children.

## EDUCATING SERVICE PROVIDERS

- Service providers should be educated as to the specific and unique needs of Traveller prisoners within the system and when released.

## COMMENTS FROM CONFERENCE PARTICIPANTS FROM THE NORTH OF IRELAND

- Unfortunately, the impact of multiple disadvantage and marginalisation is as serious and damaging to Travellers living in the North as was described at the conference for Travellers living in the south of Ireland

- Similar to the situation in the south, there appears to be very limited data on ethnicity of those individuals within the justice system, although anecdotally it is accepted that Travellers are most definitely over represented in the justice system in the North also
- Unfortunately, in the North there are a number of significant strategic issues that potentially leave Travellers in an even more precarious position. The political situation has led to a stagnancy in the delivery of some public services, with no ministers in post it is very difficult to even challenge or encourage strategic decisions to be made or followed through
- It was so refreshing and reassuring to listen to Michael Donnellan and Vivian Geiran speak with such conviction and commitment that they can and will continue to make the necessary changes that will redress the over representation of Travellers within the justice system, and I would ask them both to assert any influence they can and to encourage their counterparts in the North to ensure a similar outcome. There are only a very limited number of Traveller Support groups in the North, with no regional or strategic body. We are working hard on the ground to support individuals and families, but we need to be tackling issues such as these at a strategic level if any real change is to be affected.



# A FINAL WORD FROM CONFERENCE PARTICIPANTS

## WHAT IS YOUR RESPONSE TO WHAT YOU HEARD IN THE PRESENTATIONS?

“  
It was great to hear from young Traveller men and women being involved in supporting fellow Travellers.  
”

“  
Deeply impressed by the clarity of structure and the balanced arguments from every speaker.  
”

“  
Really positive that the conference was Traveller led.  
”

“  
Fantastic that this is peer led.  
”

“  
Inspirational speakers, based on real life experience.  
”

“  
Struck in particular by the feedback from Traveller women’s research and also by the discussion on why Travellers are in prison in such numbers and the juxtaposition of that with Traveller experience of marginalisation, poor education, accommodation, employment and so on.  
”

“  
It was enlightening to see the heads of services such as Prison and probation attending and supporting the evidence.  
”

“  
The personal testimonies were compelling and informative.  
”

“  
Very interesting material, showing the scale of the challenges involved.  
”

“  
Excellent information. Highlighted serious issue of racism and discrimination.  
”

“  
Some were moving, some were enlightening, some were informative, all were very good to excellent.  
”

“  
I was alarmed at the statistics of Traveller prisoners. It confirmed my own views on the many psychosocial issues that impact on Travellers and need to address these issues at policy level.  
”

“  
Statistics were very important for future work that seeks to address the issues highlighted.  
”

“  
I found the presentations interesting and engaging. It made me consider issues in a new light.  
”

## WHAT IS THE POTENTIAL FOR USING THE LEARNING IN YOUR OWN ORGANISATION

“  
There is huge potential for the IPS.  
”

“  
High potential based on ongoing engagement.  
”

“  
Potential for our organisation is to pass on this vital information to the Travellers we work with in and out of Prison and support them to ask the relevant services Why???

“  
Traveller culture awareness training is essential to increase the capacity of service providers to engage with Travellers and provide appropriate services.  
”

“  
We are more conscious of exploring what we can do better within our work  
”

”

“  
Gives further support to initiatives already in progress  
”

“  
I teach and have already included some of the material presented in my work.  
”

“  
The most important learning point is that it is not possible to develop projects and programmes for Travellers without the active and ongoing involvement of Travellers  
”

## WHAT ARE THE OBSTACLES THAT NEED TO BE OVERCOME FROM YOUR ORGANISATIONS PERSPECTIVES?

“  
The need to ensure that the Traveller Liaison teachers will continue to receive support from the Headteachers within their individual Units  
”

“  
Resource issues, getting buy in from all staff, identifying what we need to do!  
”

“  
We are more conscious of exploring what we can do better within our work  
”

“  
Attitudes and prejudice towards Travellers from the general public  
”

“  
Lack of real understanding of Travellers lives and the many issues that impact mental health  
”

“  
Identifying the most appropriate initiative and then getting the correct people to deliver it.  
”

“  
That people from the Traveller community feel safe in accessing our service.  
”

“  
System ignorance re the importance of holistic education -- the need to attend to personal, social and wider systemic issues as interconnected.  
”

“  
Ignorance on the part of some and reticence to engage meaningfully.  
”

## MOST USEFUL AT CONFERENCE / LEAST USEFUL

“  
Addressing the root causes of the over representation of Travellers in prison  
”

“  
Least useful - the roundtable discussions should not have been sacrificed.  
”

“  
Hearing of positive initiatives that can be implemented that can make a huge difference.  
”

“  
Least useful? term doesn't apply!  
Most useful? that Traveller speakers have demonstrated great critical and appreciative skills, offering solid analysis of the system and modelling these processes in their community.  
”

“  
Most useful: opportunity for meeting other organisations/stakeholders.  
”

“  
Most useful - historical perspectives and highlighting of systemic disadvantage.  
”

“  
The most moving and impactful part was the testimony of women in the Dochas Centre.  
”

“  
Most useful was hearing the voices of Travellers themselves, and their experiences. I didn't find anything not useful, all was great.  
”

“  
It is unusual to attend a conference where every speaker and each piece of content is relevant and engaging. That was certainly the case for this conference.  
”

“  
Service user voice was great to have, as indeed was the very obvious support that the IPS/Michael Donnellan have for your work.  
”

“  
It would have been really useful if representatives from the wider criminal justice system were involved (esp. Garda and judiciary).  
”

“  
Most useful - the networking. High level people there. the audio segments were v powerful, Thomas Mc Caan's context piece was v good. v important to have Michael Donnellan and Vivian Guerin do their pieces.  
”

“  
The most useful factor was that Travellers were the leaders in all of this conference.  
”

“  
The chairs should be commended for their careful stewardship and timekeeping. Thanks!  
”

“  
Would have been helpful to get more of an overview of the TPI generally  
”

# APPENDIX 1

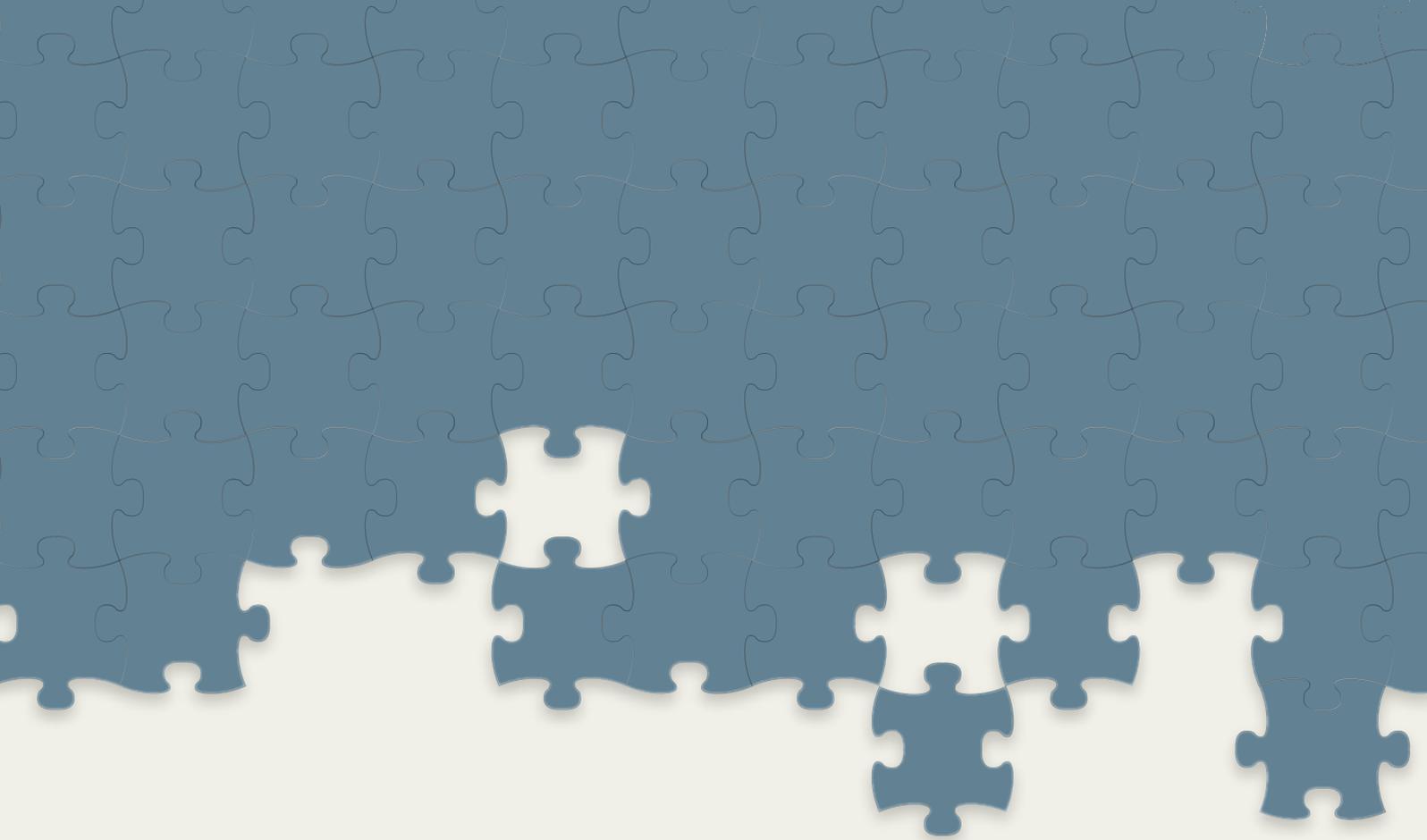
## LIST OF CONFERENCE PARTICIPANTS

Gerry	Adams	TD
Teresa	Blake	IHREC
Barbara	Bolger	Meath Travellers Workshop
Anna	Boyle	ETB
Denis	Bracken	University of Manitoba
Roisin	Brady	Craigavon Travellers
Avril	Brandon	Travellers in Prison Initiative
Cairenn	Bryson	Traveller Counselling Service
Aoife	Buggie	IASIO
Maura	Butler	ACJRD
Gillian	Butler	Cork Alliance Centre
Mary	Byrne	HSE
Emma	Byrne	IASIO
John	Byrne	Inspector of Prisons
Edward	Byrne	IPS
Fiachra	Byrne	UCD
Margaret	Cafferkey	IPS
Eimer	Cantillon	Palls
Frank	Carmody	Bedford Row Family Project
Doreen	Carpenter	Clondalkin Travellers Development Group
Fr. Brendan	Carr	Spirasi
Mags	Casey	Tipperary Rural Travellers Project
Bridget	Casey	Limerick City Traveller Health Advocates Programme
Mary	Cassidy	Tallaght Travellers Development Group
Francis	Chance	Katherine Howard Foundation
Tara	Clancy	Care After Prison
Martin	Collins	Pavee Point
Tessa	Collins	Pavee Point
John Paul	Collins	Pavee Point
Margaret	Collins	National Traveller MABS
Margaret	Connaughton	IPS
Sheila	Connolly	Cork Alliance Centre
Bridgid	Connors	
Maria Elena	Costa Sa	Clondalkin Travellers Development Group
Anne	Costello	Travellers in Prison Initiative
Anne P.	Costelloe	ETB
Darina	Coughlan	Galway Traveller Movement
Tony	Coughlan	IPS
Catherine	Cox	UCD
Anastasia	Crickley	UN Committee for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination
Margaret	Cronin	ETB
Edel M.	Cunningham	ETB
Stephen	Curran	West Cork Travellers Project
Larry	deCleur	Bedford Row Family Project

Michael	Donnellan	IPS
Yvonne	Donoghue	IPS
Bernie	Downes	ETB
Rachel	Doyle	Community Work Ireland
Amanda	Doyle	IPS
Michael	Drennan	St. Stephens Green Trust
Pamela	Drumgoole	Irish Penal Reform Trust
June	Edwards	ETB
Margaret	Faulkner	West Cork Travellers Project
John	Flavin	IPS
Peter	Fleming	ETB
Josephine	Fogarty	HSE
Carmel	Fotune	Waterford
Vivian	Geiran	Probation Service
Teresa	Geraghty	IASIO
Jack	Griffin	Tipperary Rural Travellers Project
Maggie	Hand	Blanchardstown Travellers Development Group
Brian	Hanley	Irish Council for Prisoners Overseas
Sharon	Harty	Clondalkin Addiction Support Programme
Paul	Hayes	IPS
Jacqueline	Healy	Irish Human Rights Commission
Lisa	Hogg	Craigavon Travellers
Beatrice	Hughes	Traveller Counselling Service
Christina	Hurson	Sonass Domestic Abuse
Rachel	Irwin	Bedford Row Family Project
Georgina	Jameson	Parish of the Travellers
Ann	Jordan	Traveller Visibility Group
Maria	Joyce	National Traveller Women's Forum
Christine	Joyce	Westmeath Community Development
Lilly	Kavanagh	
Sarah Jane	Kavanagh	Probation Service
Frank	Kavanagh	Traveller Mediation Service
Michelle	Kearns	National Traveller MABS
Noreen	Keary	IPS
Lorraine	Keegan	IASIO
Larry	Kelly	IPS
Bridget	Kelly	National Traveller Women's Forum
Tricia	Kelly	IPS
Mairin	Kenny	
Kathleen	Lawrence	Pavee Point
Helen	Lawrence	Pavee Point
Mikey	Lawrence	Meath Travellers Workshop
Anna	Lee	St. Stephens Green Trust
Sonya	Logan	Sonass Domestic Abuse
Anne Marie	Lyons	ETB
Conn	Mac Gabhann	The Council for Justice & Peace
Sinead	Mahon	KDPPG
Cathryn	Mannion	National Traveller Women's Forum

Edel	Matthews	ETB
Michael	Mc Donagh	Meath Travellers Workshop
Thomas	McCann	Traveller Counselling Service
Justin	McCarthy	Probation Service
Ellen	McDonagh	Meath Travellers Workshop
Sandra	McDonagh	Offaly Travellers Movement
Chris	McDonagh	Traveller Mediation Service
Geraldine	McDonnell	Parish of the Travellers
Bernadette	McGlew	St. Stephens Green Trust
Carrie	McGowan	Irish Red Cross
Sr. Maria	McGuinness	St. Stephens Green Trust
Sr Kathleen	McKenna	St. Stephens Green Trust
Pauline	McKeown	Coolmine Therapeutic Community
Karen	McLaughlin	Irish Human Rights Commission
Gerry	McNally	Probation Service
Kerri	Morrow	Newry, Mourne & Down District Council
Kieran J.	Moylan	IPS
Jane	Mulcahy	Cork Alliance Centre
Aogan	Mulcahy	UCD
John	Mulligan	Ballyfermot T Service
Barry	Murphy	Exchange House
Brian	Murphy	IPS
David	Murphy	Traveller's Voice
Mags	Murray	KDPPG
Patrick	Nevin	Tallaght Travellers Development Group
Caroline	Nevin	Westmeath Community Development
Jane	Newman	ETB
Fiona	Ni Chinneide	IPRT
Michael	Nolan	St.Catherines Community Servcies
Diane	Nurse	HSE
Brid	O Brien	INOUE
Eamon	O Cuiv	TD
Paul	O Driscoll	Parish of the Travellers
Anne	O Driscoll	Limerick City Traveller Health Advocates Programme
Anne	O Rourke	IPS
Grainne	O Toole	
Jim	O'Brien	Bray Travellers Community Development Group
Donal	O'Brien	St. Stephens Green Trust
Aileen	O'Brien	Traveller Mediation Service
Stephen	O'Connor	ETB
Ian	O'Donnell	UCD
Elizabeth	O'Donoghue	Probation Service
Kieran	O'Dwyer	KC Consulting
Fr Vincent	O'Hara	St. Stephens Green Trust
Ellen	O'Loughlin	IASIO
Martin	O'Neill	IPS
Orla	O'Neill	St. Stephens Green Trust
Margaret	O'Riada	Galway Traveller Movement

Joan M.	O'Shea	ETB
Barry	Owens	IASIO
Anita	Pannell	Limerick City Traveller Health Advocates Programme
Lalu	Paul	Clondalkin Addiction Support Programme
Fr. Joe	Poole	Castlerea Prison
Brian	Pullman	Southside Travellers Action Group
Karen	Quigley	Sonas
Martin	Reilly	IPS
Martin	Reilly	Leitrim
Pa	Reilly	Pavee Point
Tracey	Reilly	Pavee Point
Aoife	Rice	IPS
Paddy	Richardson	IASIO
Robbie	Robinson	ETB
Tina	Roche	Business in the Community
Denise	Roche	IPRT
Gary	Roche	Coolmine Therapeutic Community
Stephen	Rourke	St. Stephens Green Trust
Karen	Ryan	St. Stephens Green Trust
Vicky	Seaman	Cork Alliance Centre
Susan	Shaw	ITM
Grainne	Smith	Child Development Initiative
Marie	Stanley	Department of Justice and Equality
Una	Stapleton	Probation Service
Sara	Stokes	Community Foundation
Jamie	Stokes	U-Casadh
Amy	Sutton	St. Stephens Green Trust
Ann Marie	Sweeney	Coolmine Therapeutic Community
Graham	Symonds- Betts	Irish Red Cross
Derek	Toner	IASIO
Pyers	Walsh	IASIO
Niall	Walsh	Pathways
Lorraine	Whitty	IPRT
Imelda	Wickham	Chaplain Wheatfield



Travellers in Prison Initiative

St. Stephen's Green Trust

PO Box 950, Newbridge, Co. Kildare

Phone: 045 480 666

Email: [anne@sstg.ie](mailto:anne@sstg.ie) | [www.sstg.ie](http://www.sstg.ie)

