

Travellers in Prison Initiative:

*Towards Developing a Strategy
for Travellers in Prison*

2016

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INTRODUCTION

While there are no official statistics on the number of Travellers in prison it is recognised that Travellers are significantly over-represented within the prison system - although Travellers only account for 0.6% of the overall population in the Republic of Ireland it is estimated that they account for 22% of the female prison population and 15% of the male prison population (source: Irish Prison Service). The disproportionate representation of Travellers in the penal system is not a situation that is unique to Ireland; the same trend can be found in other countries with an indigenous minority ethnic population.

The Travellers in Prison Initiative (TPI) was developed in 2014 as a response to the particular needs and circumstances of Travellers within the 14 prisons in the Republic of Ireland. The background to the TPI can be traced to the Irish Penal Reform Trust's research report 'Travellers in the Irish Prison System'. This excellent piece of research clearly documents the challenges and difficulties being experienced by Travellers within Irish prisons. The research report formed the basis of a workshop which was attended by over 50 Travellers and Traveller representatives and jointly hosted by the Irish Travellers Movement (ITM) and St. Stephens Green Trust (SSGT) in July 2014. There was unanimous approval at this workshop for setting up an initiative which would focus on the issue of Travellers in Irish prisons.

SSGT Trustees allocated funding for the TPI for a 3 year period from 2015 to 2018. The Irish Prison Service and the Irish Probation Service also fund the initiative and grant funding has also been received from the HSE to conduct research on the specific issues for Traveller women in the criminal justice system. The 3 year programme is operated by SSGT.

An interagency Steering Group has been appointed to guide the direction of the TPI which includes representatives from Pavee Point, 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 and the Education and Training Board.

The TPI has significant potential both in relation to supporting particular interventions within Irish prisons and also in relation to positively influencing policies and procedures which more broadly impact upon the lives of Travellers in Irish prisons and their families.

The overall aim of the TPI is to embed positive change in policy and practice. The TPI have identified five key action areas that have the potential to inform policy and practice in a pragmatic and sustainable manner. They are:

1. Building a knowledge base about Travellers in prison
2. Increasing and improving access to prison-based services for Travellers
3. Strengthening supports for families of Travellers in prison, and after prison, using a multi-agency approach
4. Strengthening self-identity and self-advocacy for Travellers in prison by mainstreaming a peer-support model
5. Increasing awareness and capacity through training and learning programmes to prison service and probation service staff

Consultations to date have confirmed that, in all of these five areas, there is both the recognition of the need for change, as well as a commitment from key actors to co-operate. We trust that this paper will be a useful resource for organisations and agencies concerned with improving outcomes for Travellers in prison and their families.

*Anne Costello,
Co-ordinator, Travellers in Prison Initiative, St Stephen's Green Trust, December 2016*

Background to Strategy Paper

The TPI commissioned a literature review in order to provide information and evidence to inform and support initiatives under the five main action areas.

This briefing paper discusses each of these five areas by teasing out why development in the particular area is important; it addresses the practical implementation of similar measures in the UK prison system; and the advantages of introducing similar measures in the Irish prison system.

It is a practical document that attempts to demonstrate how each of the 5 action areas can be progressed by using references to relevant literature and case studies. The briefing draws on Dr. Conn Mac Gabhann's experience as a researcher and manager with the Traveller Equality Project - a London-based initiative which works with Irish Travellers, Gypsies and Romanies in the UK criminal justice system - while also citing relevant empirical evidence. The report describes the process involved in the development of particular interventions, as well as providing a rationale as to why it would be a good option to be pursued by TPI. The briefing provides details of relevant research so that TPI (and colleagues around the country who are working with Travellers in prison) can access further information to build their knowledge base and use as evidence to support the case for changes in policy or practice.

This briefing is not a detailed study of the situation of Irish Travellers in the Irish prison system. Rather, it is, intended to act as a report of why this area of work is important for improving the current situation and how, in general terms, positive changes may be achieved. As this report is not based upon a dialogue with stakeholders such as the Irish Prison Service and the Irish Probation Service, outlining exactly how measures to address the situation of Travellers may be introduced within the Irish context is beyond the scope of this report. Nonetheless, this report does offer a robust, evidence-based rationale for the introduction of a variety of measures within the Irish context which are likely to appeal to criminal justice professionals committed to rehabilitation and reducing reoffending.

A criticism of this report may be that it depends too heavily on examples from the United Kingdom prison system and in particular the work of the Traveller Equality Project (TEP), which is based in London and works in prisons across England and Wales. However, as the UK has a similar legal, social welfare and media context to the Republic of Ireland and has a large Irish Traveller population¹ it offers a useful comparative case study.

Likewise, drawing on the experience of the UK's Traveller Equality Project is entirely reasonable. TEP has in recent years successfully led improvements in the treatment of Irish Travellers in the prison system, winning support from relevant state agencies, government ministers and NGOs. Indeed, regarding comparisons between the work of TPI in Ireland and TEP, it is worth noting that many of the Irish Traveller prisoners that TEP engages with are Irish nationals and have previously been in custody in the Republic of Ireland.

Irish Traveller Prisoners and State Agencies

Irish Travellers are not currently recognised as a distinctive ethnic group in the Republic of Ireland. However, the following points should be noted regarding this issue at least insofar as it affects service provision to Travellers in prison. In the first instance, there is a duty on a public body such as the Irish Prison Service (IPS), to provide *appropriate* and *effective* services exists for all sections of society whether members of a legally recognised ethnicity or not. The *Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014* sets out the Positive Duty required of Public Bodies.² It states that:

1 In the 2011 UK census, 57,680 individuals listed themselves as Irish Traveller or Gypsy, though it is estimated that the total figure may be approximately 300,000

2 Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014, available at: <http://www.oireachtas.ie/documents/bills28/acts/2014/a2514.pdf>

42. (1) A public body shall, in the performance of its functions, have regard to the need to –
- (a) eliminate discrimination,
 - (b) promote equality of opportunity and treatment of its staff and the persons to whom it provides services, and
 - (c) protect the human rights of its members, staff and the persons to whom it provides services.
- (2) For the purposes of giving effect to subsection (1), a public body shall, having regard to the functions and purpose of the body and to its size and the resources available to it –
- (a) set out in a manner that is accessible to the public in its strategic plan (howsoever described) an assessment of the human rights and equality issues it believes to be relevant to the functions and purpose of the body and the policies, plans and actions in place or proposed to be put in place to address those issues, and
 - (b) report in a manner that is accessible to the public on developments and achievements in that regard in its annual report (howsoever described).

Secondly, it is likely that Irish Traveller ethnicity will be recognised by the Irish state in the future. The pressure on the state to do so is increasing from respected international legal institutions, including those of which the state is a member. The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child published its ‘Concluding observations on the combined third and fourth periodic reports of Ireland’ on 1st March 2016.³ The report stated:

69. The Committee is deeply concerned about the structural discrimination against Traveller and Roma children, including as regards their access to education, health and an adequate standard of living. It is particularly concerned about:
- (a) The lack of recognition of the Traveller and Roma as ethnic minority groups by the State party, resulting, inter alia, in the lack of adequate data and consequently a weak basis for targeted support programmes and measures.
70. The Committee urges the State party to undertake concrete and comprehensive measures to address the structural discrimination against Traveller and Roma children, particularly with regards to access to education, health and an adequate standard of living. In this light, the Committee further recommends that the State party:
- (a) Consider legally recognising the Traveller and Roma as ethnic groups in the State party; and, in doing so, implement disaggregated data collection on these communities to facilitate the provision of targeted support programmes and measures...

There are therefore compelling legal reasons why public bodies should address the apparent over-representation and disproportionately negative experiences of Irish Travellers in prison. Yet one reason for action on the issue stands above all others: Good service provision (e.g. literacy courses, addiction treatment or behaviour management interventions), means that the Traveller prisoner, the prisoner’s family and society are positively rather than negatively impacted following the release of the prisoner.

Conclusion

While imprisonment can often be the darkest period in a person’s life, opportunities in prison can sometimes change the direction of that life for the better. There is often an assumption made about a perceived lack of interest amongst Irish Travellers in services provided by the state, especially those in the criminal justice sector. Similar assumptions about Traveller participation in prison services in England and Wales were the norm until recently. As of March 2016, the largest prison literacy charity in England and Wales, the Shannon Trust, recorded that throughout the prison estate 11% of all participants came from a Traveller background,

3 Concluding observations on the combined third and fourth periodic reports of Ireland, CRC /C/IRL/CO/3-4, (UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, 1st March 2016) available at: <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G16/O39/97/PDF/G16O3997.pdf?OpenElement>

the highest participation levels of any group other than White British.⁴ As is the case with all groups, Irish Travellers will access services that are suitable, relevant and delivered in an atmosphere that values their culture background. The following report is intended to suggest ways in which such services can be developed within Irish prisons.

4 These figures were derived from a survey of Shannon Trust Reading Plan participants which was carried out by the Shannon Trust in 2016. This information was provided by the Shannon Trust, 24/03/2016.

SECTION 1

BUILDING A KNOWLEDGE BASE ABOUT TRAVELLERS IN PRISON

Without Accurate Statistics Substantive Progress is Impossible

The most basic step in creating a knowledge base about Irish Travellers in prison is establishing statistics on this prisoner group. The more detailed the figures on Travellers in custody, the more effective any subsequent interventions will be.

Establishing the exact number of Travellers in the 14 prisons across the Republic of Ireland must be the priority. Without accurate figures, all proposed interventions will, to varying degrees, be based on speculation and unlikely to gain support from stakeholders.

Specifically, detailed 'cross-referenceable' information on gender, age range, education/literacy levels, employment, health and offences will provide the foundations for long term structured interventions. Statistical analysis may, for example, illustrate literacy interventions are most necessary for female Traveller prisoners or that action on health should be primarily directed at older Traveller males.

Collecting accurate statistics serves the dual purpose of both the advocacy for and the development of these interventions. By offering an evidential basis for why specialist intervention is necessary for Traveller prisoners, both statutory and NGO stakeholders can commit resources to such initiatives. Furthermore, when stakeholders accept the principle of such interventions, statistically driven needs analyses can determine the form and location of such initiatives.

Two recent studies have examined the issue of Travellers in Irish prisons, the *All Ireland Traveller Health Study* (UCD, 2010) and *Travellers in the Irish Prison System: A qualitative study* (IPRT, 2014).^{5 6} While neither study has been able to provide accurate figures for the population of Travellers in prison, both reported the substantial over-representation of Travellers in the Irish prison system. The AITHS reported that based on IPS estimates, the risk of a Traveller being imprisoned was 11 times that of a non-Traveller, with Traveller women 22 times more likely to be imprisoned than non-Traveller women. Without an accurate figure, at least for the overall number of Travellers in prison, it is highly unlikely that stakeholders can commit (or can be pressured into committing) the resources necessary for effective and much needed interventions.

Of course, establishing 'a knowledge base about Travellers in prison' is much more than discovering the numbers of Travellers in prison. It is also about building a picture of Travellers' opinions, attitudes and experiences. While this can be done through group meetings, interviews and events in prison with Travellers, there is a real danger of using a one-off meeting, series of interviews or events as a representation of the views of all Travellers, particularly in an environment where there is an inherent mistrust of such forums and their effectiveness. If one wishes to accurately represent Travellers' opinions, attitudes and experiences, one must become a constant, dependable and effective presence within the prisons. The alternative, which is often the case in prison outreach work, is that the loudest voice drowns out other opinions with personal

5 *All Ireland Traveller Health Study, Summary of Findings*, (Dublin: University College Dublin, 2010) available at: https://www.ucd.ie/t4cms/AITHS_SUMMARY.pdf. This report stated that 'While all prisons responded to the census request, 3 all-male prisons, with large prisoner populations, could not identify Traveller prisoners' (p. 110).

6 *Travellers in the Irish Prison System: A qualitative study* (Dublin: IPRT, 2014). Available at: http://www.iprt.ie/files/IPRT_Travellers_Report_web.pdf

narratives and hopeless negativity. In short, one has a choice to make in prison outreach work - is your work defined by a one-off meeting where the loudest voice says “They’re all racist towards us and they always will be” and “Education is not what Travellers do!”? Or is your work defined by feedback gained from regular and dependable interactions with Traveller prisoners including those who do not attend meetings? Undoubtedly, the second approach to building up an accurate picture of the opinions and experiences of Traveller prisoners is the more effective and reliable, including a broader and more nuanced range of views.

How have other projects established knowledge bases for BAME prisoners?

In the United Kingdom there are over 900 organisations and projects providing services for prisoners and prisoners’ families with many of them focussing specifically on Black and Minority Ethnic (BAME) groups.⁷ These organisations and projects operate on various different models. Some are limited to specific prisons, some work with prisoners inside and also with individuals on release. Some provide straightforward advice phone lines while others may provide more interactive support such as those working with prisoners’ families providing welfare advice, advocacy and counselling.

Aside from these numerous prison-related projects there are three main non-governmental organisations that conduct research and champion evidence-based prison reform: the Prison Reform Trust, the Howard League and Clinks.^{8 9 10} Smaller projects working directly with prisoners will often base their work, strategies and business plans upon research conducted by these organisations.

Most importantly, NOMS (the National Offender Management Service), the agency of the Ministry of Justice (MOJ) responsible for prison and probation services in England and Wales, gathers accurate information on its prisoner population. To assist in delivering effective custodial and rehabilitative services, prisons in England and Wales use P-NOMIS (Prison National Offender Management Information System) a database used for the management of offenders. It contains offenders’ personal details, age group, type of offence(s), sentence length, prisoner movement data (internal and external), participation in education, case note information, and involvement in breaches of prison discipline. P-NOMIS also collects information on a prisoner’s ethnicity, nationality and religion.¹¹

Significantly, monitoring of ethnic identity within UK prisons is based on prisoners’ self-identification. A prisoner informs prison staff of the ethnic category which describes his or her background most accurately. This information is most often collected on reception and induction into prison. However, a prisoner can update, change or add information about his or her ethnicity by informing the appropriate prison officer.

Why do prisons in the UK keep this information?

Irish Travellers have been a legally recognised ethnic group in the UK since 2000.¹² For the first time, in 2011, the UK Government’s national census used a combined ‘Gypsy or Irish Traveller’ category (alongside the other recognised ethnicities) to gauge the size and nature of this particular grouping.¹³ There are specific obligations on state bodies in the United Kingdom to address the needs of legally recognised minorities with

7 For a list of projects and organisations working with BAME prisoners in the United Kingdom see Clinks’ directory at: <http://www.clinks.org/directory>

8 More information about the Prison Reform Trust is available from: <http://www.prisonreformtrust.org.uk>

9 More information about the Howard League is available from: <http://www.howardleague.org>

10 More information about the Clinks is available from: <http://www.clinks.org>

11 The ethnic categories used in prisons in England and Wales are drawn from the 2011 UK census: ‘2011 Census Self-Identified Classification, Census 18-point classification: White - British; White - Irish; White - Gypsy or Irish traveller [sic]; White - Other; Black - African; Black - Caribbean; Black - Other; Asian - Bangladeshi; Asian - Indian; Asian - Pakistani; Asian - Chinese; Asian - Other; Mixed White and Black African (Goes to Black on 4+1); White and Black Caribbean (Goes to Black on 4+1); White and Asian (Goes to Asian on 4+1); Any other mixed background (Goes to Other on 4+1); Other Arab; Any other ethnic group; Not Stated’ *Statistics on Race and the Criminal Justice System 2012*, Ministry of Justice, London (2013, p.161).

12 O’Leary v Allied Domecq, 29/8/2000, CL 950275

13 Census 2011, UK, available at: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/census/2011census>

which they are in contact. In the UK, as a legally recognised group, the *Equality Act 2010* places a positive legal obligation on the National Offender Management Service, (NOMS), to see that the individual needs of Traveller prisoners receive due regard. NOMS also has obligations under the *Human Rights Act 1998*. These are to uphold the individual rights of prisoners enumerated in the *European Convention of Human Rights*. Notably, these include respect for an individual's private and family life and protection from discrimination in the enjoyment of the protected rights. Since Autumn 2011, NOMS has monitored prisoners from what is termed a 'W3 - Gypsy or Irish Traveller' background.

As a consequence of the legal recognition of Travellers, prisons in the United Kingdom are obliged to recognise the specific needs of this community in custody. In practice this means the monitoring of the numbers and custodial experience of Traveller prisoners. It also means that where there is a need for services or intervention flagged-up as a result of monitoring, that such provision can or at least, should be introduced. A review of the regular reports produced by HM Inspectorate of Prisons shows the extent to which the UK Government addresses the needs of specific BAME groups in custody.¹⁴ Commentary, commendation or criticism of a prison's performance regarding Gypsy, Roma and Traveller prisoners in a particular institution routinely appear in these reports

Significantly, it should be noted that while legal recognition of Traveller ethnicity has deepened institutional commitment to providing for this group, for years preceding recognition some prisons in the UK provided Traveller specific services. There has been a longstanding recognition amongst prison staff that the issues faced by Traveller prisoners require specialist intervention and staff have often attempted to address this individually. Prisons have long recognised that catering for the needs of Traveller prisoners, engaging them in education and other services makes for more contented prisoners, more contented staff and a more positive environment overall.

Effective ethnic monitoring in UK prisons makes sense for prisons because it provides the tools to evaluate strengths and weaknesses within the system. Monitoring allows prison managers to allocate resources, staff and expenditure according to need not speculation. Furthermore, such monitoring allows state bodies and other stakeholders to focus their resources in terms of reducing recidivism and developing crime diversion pathways

Why do prisoners in the UK provide this information?

Prisoners in England and Wales are not obliged to provide details of their ethnic background to prison authorities. Nevertheless, most prisoners do offer this information to staff when it is requested upon reception into prison. Since 2011, many Traveller prisoners in England and Wales have volunteered this information to prison staff.

As recently as 2011, Traveller prisoners frequently stated that they were reluctant to publicise the fact that they were from a Traveller background for fear of discrimination.¹⁵ In light of this, why do many Traveller prisoners in English and Welsh prisons nowadays, request to be officially recorded as 'W3 - Gypsy or Irish Traveller'? There are a number of reasons for the current trend in self-defining as 'W3 - Gypsy or Irish Traveller' in prison. The most forceful reason is that the culture of diversity awareness within prisons in England and Wales is so deeply embedded that Traveller prisoners are aware that they are unlikely to be further stigmatised by being officially recognised as Travellers within the prison. Most prisons have highly visible diversity awareness initiatives which both protect and promote diverse groupings who may be vulnerable as a consequence of their different race, religion, sexuality or physical (dis-)ability. Different minority groups within prison are celebrated on a regular basis through the staging of events and the production of displays.

14 Inspection reports by HM Inspectorate of Prisons are available at: <https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmiprison/inspections/>

15 Prior to 2011, most Irish Travellers in prisons in England and Wales were designated as 'White British' or 'White Irish'. See Mac Gabhann, *Voices Unheard: A Study of Irish Travellers in Prison*, (London: Irish Chaplaincy in Britain, 2011), available at: <http://www.irishchaplaincy.org.uk/Publisher/File.aspx?ID=81554>

In terms of rights protection of minority groups in prison, the most obvious example is the extensive system of reporting discrimination. On each wing in every prison in England and Wales there should be access to some version of a *Racist Incident Report Form* which allows a prisoner to highlight discriminatory behaviour or language involving other prisoners or staff.

More positively, many Traveller prisoners have chosen to officially record their ethnicity because of the benefits that may result from doing so. In practical terms, prisoners in England and Wales are aware that staff time, prison resources and modification of services are allocated on a basis of need. Traveller prisoners are aware that by self-ascribing as a Traveller they are more likely to get access to a regular Traveller Group, retain a Traveller Prisoner Representative to advocate for them, access Traveller cultural resources such as DVDs and magazines, and celebrate festivals such as Saint Patrick's Day and Traveller History Month in June. In a number of prisons if a person is from a Traveller background, he or she is allowed to place more money on their phone credit account than if they were not a Traveller. This provision is designed to take account of the fact that some Travellers cannot call family members on landlines as a result of their family living on sites or camps. Traveller prisoners, as a consequence, often have higher phone charges calling mobile phone numbers. Similarly, in some cases Traveller prisoners can have prison Visiting Orders sent out to designated addresses (such as Irish community centres or other charity addresses) for their family members to pick up in cases where the family does not live at an authorised address.

Acknowledging one's Traveller ethnicity in prisons in England and Wales has various advantages in terms of service provision (e.g. celebrations, classes and meetings), access to resources (e.g. DVDs and magazines) and not least, the psychological empowerment of asserting one's membership of a community. Encouraging Travellers to self-identify as being from a Traveller background enables prison authorities to understand the scale of the issues affecting this group and the resources needed to ameliorate these challenges.

Establishing a knowledge base on Irish Travellers in Irish prisons

The first step in establishing a knowledge base is the introduction of effective monitoring of Irish Travellers in prison. As the Republic of Ireland does not currently recognise Traveller ethnicity, there is not an overt obligation on public bodies to specifically address the needs of this group. However, various state bodies do in fact recognise the distinctiveness of this community.^{16 17} Moreover, under Section 42 of the *Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014* there is a positive duty on public bodies to: 1. Eliminate discrimination; 2. Promote equality of opportunity and treatment of its staff and the persons to whom it provides services; and 3. Protect the human rights of its members, staff and the persons to whom it provides services. Therefore, regardless of whether state bodies are obliged to specifically recognise Traveller ethnicity, there remains an over-riding obligation on the Irish Prison Service to eliminate discrimination, promote equality of opportunity and protect the human rights of service users. There is a *prima facie* case to suggest that the failure to monitor a distinctive ethnic / cultural group which represents a large section of the prison population constitutes the non-performance of a positive legal duty on the part of the Irish Prison Service.¹⁸

Ultimately, a professional public body that wishes to continuously evaluate and improve service delivery both in terms of quality and cost-benefit, should implement a process of monitoring those with whom it engages. Monitoring the size and nature of a prison population is a key aspect of best practice internationally, providing

16 See for example, the intercultural guidance from the Health Service Executive available at: <http://www.hse.ie/eng/services/Publications/SocialInclusion/InterculturalGuide/Traveller/>

17 See for example, *Traveller Inter-Agency Process: The Way Forward Report of 1st Annual TIG Conference* (Dublin: Department for Justice and Equality, May 2015) available at: <http://www.justice.ie/en/JELR/TIG%20Annual%20Conference%202015.pdf/Files/TIG%20Annual%20Conference%202015.pdf>

18 *The All Ireland Traveller Health Study, Summary of Findings*, (Dublin: University College Dublin, 2010), available at: https://www.ucd.ie/t4cms/AITHS_SUMMARY.pdf, noted that 'Travellers accounted for 8.7% of the prison population according to the IPS [Irish Prison Service]', p. 110.

an indication as to how prisons can perform more effectively for prisoners, for staff and for society.^{19 20 21}

Monitoring a particular group requires participation from two parties – those doing the monitoring and those being monitored. This relationship – in this case, prison staff and Irish Traveller prisoners – requires trust, time and resources. The implementation of a systematic process of monitoring is quite straightforward i.e. establishing a procedure at reception in which all individuals entering custody are routinely asked if they are from a Traveller background. However, Travellers entering custody are likely to wonder what advantage notifying the authorities of their background will be. The answer must be that acknowledging one's ethnicity will mean that one gets access to more appropriate services provided by the Irish Prison Service and stakeholders such as Traveller community organisations. In short, without an incentive to self-identify as a Traveller it is unlikely that the Irish Prison Service will be able to establish an accurate process of monitoring.

Of course, the issue of incentives for one particular group may raise the question as to whether different service provision, for example, a regular Traveller Prisoner Group Meeting, would be legal given its seeming preference for one group of prisoners (Travellers) over and above another group (non-Travellers). However, this is not a substantial issue as it is a long-established legal principle that providing different provision for different groups within society in order to facilitate equality of opportunity is not just permitted, but required by public bodies.

In England and Wales, Traveller prisoners have sought to be registered as 'W3 – Gypsy or Irish Traveller', both because to do so provides the benefits mentioned above and because within a context which protects and promotes diversity, Travellers are confident that their distinctiveness will be supported. In England and Wales, incoming prisoners should routinely be asked whether they are from an Irish Traveller or Gypsy background when entering a prison from a court or on transfer from another prison. While in practice this is not always the case, a continuing publicity campaign through posters, meetings and prison radio adverts informs Irish Traveller and Gypsy prisoners that they can register their ethnicity, if they have not already done so, with their personal officer.

The proliferation of Traveller materials in prisons in England and Wales, including posters informing Travellers in prison that they can register their ethnicity, are a visual symbol of a prison's commitment to celebrating diversity.²² Similarly, prison libraries and education departments in England and Wales have access to a wide range of resources such as emergent reading books, magazines, posters and DVDs which are distributed by the Traveller Equality Project.²³ Prison staff and Traveller prisoners have access to the widely available *Gypsy and Traveller Prisoners: A Good Practice Guide*.²⁴ Most effective in terms of creating a sense of community amongst Travellers in prison and also in sharing good practice has been *Travellers in Prison News* (TIPN). TIPN which is produced by the Traveller Equality Project is an eight page newsletter which is distributed in hard copy to hundreds of Travellers four times a year. It is distributed within prison by diversity and chaplaincy staff who print off the electronic version and distribute to hundreds more, and is also available on the NOMS

19 See *Race Review 2008, Implementing Race Equality in Prisons – Five Years On*, (London: NOMS, 2008) and specific reference to Traveller prisoners. Available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/294157/1000439crace_review_part_1.pdf

20 See specific reference to *Traveller prisoners in HM Chief Inspector of Prisons for England and Wales Annual Report 2014 – 15*, (London: HM Chief Inspector of Prisons, 2015) p.45. Available at: <https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmiprison/wp-content/uploads/sites/4/2015/07/HMIP-AR-2014-15-TSO-Final1.pdf>

21 See specific reference to *Traveller prisoners in Bromley Briefings Prison Factfile Autumn 2015*, (London: Prison Reform Trust, 2015). Available at: <http://www.prisonreformtrust.org.uk/Portals/O/Documents/Bromley%20Briefings/Factfile%20Autumn%202015.pdf>

22 See for example the Traveller Equality Project's *Prison Monitoring W3 Poster*: <http://www.irishchaplaincy.org.uk/Publisher/File.aspx?ID=102701>

23 For an overview of resources available to prison staff and prisoners see the Traveller Equality Project's webpage: http://www.irishchaplaincy.org.uk/Groups/160519/Irish_Chaplaincy_in/Our_Work/Traveller_Equality/Traveller_Equality.aspx

24 Mac Gabhann and Cottrell-Boyce, *Gypsy and Traveller Prisoners: A Good Practice Guide*, (London: Irish Chaplaincy in Britain, 2013), available at: <http://www.irishchaplaincy.org.uk/Publisher/File.aspx?ID=130347>

intranet for all prison and probation staff. TIPN provides a platform for Traveller prisoners to articulate issues that are important to them but it also (as with all these initiatives) symbolises that the community is valued and valuable, in the same manner as other groups within prison.²⁵

Travellers tend to self-identify as Travellers in prisons in England and Wales because diversity (in terms of ethnicity, sexuality, disability etc.) in general is valued and services are delivered accordingly. Specifically, with regards to Travellers in the 135 prisons in England and Wales, a range of initiatives introduced by prison staff and NGOs since 2011 have created an environment in which Travellers are comfortable in officially recording their background. Irish Travellers in Irish prisons will self-identify and engage further with services when the Irish Prison Service and other stakeholders create an atmosphere in which Traveller culture is protected and celebrated.

Summary - Establishing a Knowledge Base

- Without accurate figures on the population of Travellers in prison the Irish Prison Service and other stakeholders cannot effectively address the distinctive issues faced by this prisoner group.
- All individuals must be asked on reception into prison whether they come from a Traveller background.
- Travellers will only self-identify within a prison environment that protects and promotes their cultural and ethnic background.
- The Irish Prison Service must implement a vigorous campaign to protect and promote Traveller identity, including punishment for racist behaviour and language, and the promotion of a positive Traveller narrative.
- Traveller organisations must offer prison staff and prisoners the advice, information and resources necessary to create a positive atmosphere. By so doing, further Traveller specific initiatives related to vocational training, literacy, mental health, behaviour management, etc. may be developed in partnership with the IPS and other agencies.

25 The latest edition of *Travellers in Prison News*, (TIPN), March 2016, is available at: <http://www.irishchaplaincy.org.uk/Publisher/File.aspx?ID=168136>

SECTION 2

INCREASING AND IMPROVING ACCESS TO PRISON-BASED SERVICES FOR TRAVELLERS

Listening to the Needs of Travellers and Implementing these Changes within Prisons

All prisoners want to improve their situation. There may be disagreement amongst prisoners themselves, prison staff and criminologists about what constitutes improvement in individual cases but nevertheless there is universal agreement that the vast majority of prisoners want some sort of improvement or change in their circumstances. Improvement, change or development in prison is largely dependent on the services and facilities which are available in prison and upon the willingness of prisoners to access these services and facilities. Increased access to services by prisoners promotes a healthier society by reducing reoffending.²⁶

²⁷ Increased access to services by prisoners improves the life chances of that prisoner and his family circle.

Indeed, even prisoners who maintain that they want to avoid accessing services in prison and simply state 'I just want to get out. Get a job and get a place to live', in reality want services to improve their circumstances. Wanting to get out of prison, wanting to get a job and wanting a place to live all require accessing prison services to achieve these aims. Literacy, qualifications, and good mental and physical health are vital for a prisoner wishing to get out, get a job and get a place to live. Prison-based services at their best can work on these issues to reach even the most initially reluctant prisoner by tapping into what most people want a - family life, a job and a home.

Recognising that service provision (such as education, literacy, qualifications, mental/physical healthcare, drug/alcohol rehabilitation and behaviour management etc.), must be an integral part of any custodial experience is a crucial starting point in order to increase access to services. Prison-based services such as these must become core as opposed to additional activities. Participation in education, drug and alcohol rehab and behaviour management courses must become the norm rather than the exception. Otherwise the action of accessing these services (for example, volunteering to go to a literacy course or attending a behaviour management group) becomes in itself a form of drawing attention to oneself.

As the Irish Traveller community generally-speaking encourages the traits of independence, self-reliance and stoicism, normalising participation in prison-based services is vital for the participation of this ethnic group. In prison where people are often at their most vulnerable, prisoners are unlikely to ask for help or access services in case it is perceived as showing weakness which might in turn make them more exposed to bullying or discrimination. In short, if you were to ask a Traveller man in a prison that has not promoted the right environment for service provision, 'What services would you like to see available in prison?'; you are likely to get a short response along the lines of 'Everything is fine. I just want to do my time and get out.'

26 In the UK, 47% of prisoners report having no qualifications. This compares to 15% of the working age general population. See Kathryn Hopkins, *The Pre-custody Employment, Training and Education Status of Newly Sentenced Prisoners* (London: Ministry of Justice, 2012) p.14.

27 Prisoners who attend vocational training in prison are more likely to secure employment shortly after release and hence are less likely to reoffend. See Ian Brunton-Smith and Kathryn Hopkins, *The impact of experience in prison on the employment status of longer-sentenced prisoners after release*, (London: Ministry of Justice, 2014) p.3; and Ofsted, *The report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2013/14: Further education and skills*, (Manchester: Ofsted, 2014) p.14.

While it is unquestionably true that addressing issues such as literacy or domestic violence requires the participant's commitment to deal with these issues, it is also true that prisons can make participation in interventions a normal part of prison life, rather than the exception. As a community that has managed to survive largely outside bureaucracy and which has faced discrimination in all aspects of life in the state including schooling and health provision, an increase in Irish Traveller participation will only come about if the Irish Prison Service provide relevant, constant and tailored service provision.

How has increased participation in prison-based services occurred in the UK?

In 2010 and 2011, the London-based Traveller Equality Project carried out interviews, focus groups and discussions with staff in prisons across England and Wales.²⁸ One of the most common themes raised by Irish Travellers at the start of these meetings was that education wasn't something that interested them or that education wasn't a traditional Traveller activity. On discussing the issue at length, it became apparent that many Travellers had very bad experiences of formal education, many of them had experienced discrimination, or had left school early to start work and had actually trained within the family circle to do a variety of jobs. It became clear in these discussions that Travellers overwhelmingly did want education and the skills necessary to live life as they chose but they did not wish to return to a formal classroom setting with all of its negative associations. In March 2016, a survey by the Shannon Trust, the most successful prison literacy charity in the UK, found that 11% of all participants on its Reading Plan were from a Traveller background. More Travellers are accessing this prison literacy service than any other ethnic group in prison other than the 'White British' category.^{29 30} This illustrates that when suitable services are made available within a positive prison environment, a significant number of Irish Traveller prisoners evidently will engage with these services.

Increasing Traveller participation in prison-based services has three primary strands:

1. Encouraging Travellers to want to participate (a task for Traveller prisoners, Traveller organisations and the IPS);
2. Creating an atmosphere in prison in which participation is both normal and positive (a task for Traveller organisations and the IPS);
3. Providing suitable services in prison (a task for Traveller organisations and the IPS).

1) Encouraging Travellers to want to participate

Encouraging Traveller participation in prison-based services is about changing the narrative amongst Travellers in prison from 'Education/accessing mental health services/behaviour management initiatives is not what Travellers do', to a narrative where accessing these services is normal and empowering. In prisons in the UK, the sight of Traveller prisoners going to the library or going to another cell to meet a reading mentor to learn to read is not viewed as a weakness but instead it is part of an overarching narrative which has developed within prison there. This narrative places an emphasis on the richness of Traveller culture, explaining that Travellers have, as a result of circumstance and prejudice, been unable to access services outside prison and now inside prison accessing such services allows a Traveller to empower him or herself.

In practical terms, what does this change of narrative mean and how is it achieved? In part, the change of narrative is for example, about transforming the feelings of shame experienced by Travellers in prison who cannot read or write into something more constructive. The new narrative within prisons in England and Wales celebrates the numerous Traveller success stories inside and outside prison, and points out why

28 See Mac Gabhann, *Voices Unheard: A Study of Irish Travellers in Prison*, (London: Irish Chaplaincy in Britain, 2011), available at: <http://www.irishchaplaincy.org.uk/Publisher/File.aspx?ID=81554>

29 These figures were derived from a survey of Shannon Trust Reading Plan participants which was carried out by the Shannon Trust in 2016. This information was provided by the Shannon Trust, 24/03/2016.

30 This is a hugely disproportionate level of participation in this prison-based service, given that overall, 5% of prisoners in England and Wales stated that they considered themselves to be 'Gypsy, Romany or Traveller' in 2012 - 2013, *HM Inspectorate of Prisons, People in Prison: Gypsies, Romany and Travellers*, (London: HM Inspectorate of Prisons, February 2014) p.5.

Travellers have often missed out on education and why participation in prison services such as education and rehab courses is a sign of strength, standing up for oneself and gaining the skills to provide for one's family upon release.

2) Creating an atmosphere in prison in which participation is both normal and positive

How has this change in narrative been achieved in the UK? National prison management – NOMS – have in recent years sought to comprehend and explain the reasons for such poor participation in services by Traveller prisoners.³¹ Likewise, HM Inspectorate of Prisons, the Prisons and Probation Ombudsman and the Independent Monitoring Board have all drawn attention to the barriers to service provision faced by this ethnic group in prison.³² As a result the management and staff of individual prisons, admittedly to varying degrees, accept a narrative which admits Traveller have faced systematic exclusion from services and opportunities, and prisons must respond to address this inequality.³³

A practical consequence of acknowledging institutional racism against Travellers in UK prisons has been that Travellers themselves now use the language of rights and empowerment when talking about accessing services in prison. Whereas in the past illiteracy or even drug addiction were seen as weaknesses on the part of the individual, there is an increasing awareness amongst Travellers in prison that addressing these issues by accessing services is itself a success.

In prisons in England and Wales, cells, wings, chaplaincies, education departments and libraries have celebrations of Traveller culture in the form of posters, newsletters, books and magazines. Collectively, these represent an embedding of a more positive atmosphere for Travellers within prisons in the UK.³⁴ As the atmosphere in prison has changed towards Travellers, so accessing services for most Traveller prisoners in England and Wales has become much more a matter of routine than it was 15 years ago.

3) Providing suitable services in prison

Increasing participation in services also depends on making suitable services available. Primarily, this is done by engaging with Traveller prisoners in order to identify the type and nature of services that are of interest. Needless to say, this is not a case of offering *carte blanche* to prisoners to decide how and in what way resources should be managed within prison. However, establishing suitable provision for Travellers involves discerning what would improve service provision, in terms of education, mental health or rehab, and devising how to best utilise resources within the existing priorities of the IPS.

In prisons in England and Wales developing better service delivery is often facilitated through liaison with an established Traveller Prisoner Group and/or Traveller Prisoner Representative. Indeed, it is normal practice in some prisons for staff within different departments in prison such as Healthcare, Education, Security and Probation to attend meetings to provide information and gather feedback.³⁵

31 See Commission for Racial Equality, *Race Equality in Prisons: A formal investigation by the Commission for Racial Equality into HM Prison Service of England and Wales, Part Two*, (London: Commission for Racial Equality, 2003); and NOMS, *Race Review 2008, Implementing Race Equality in Prisons – Five Years On*, (London: NOMS, 2008).

32 See HM Inspectorate of Prisons, *People in Prison: Gypsies, Romany and Travellers*, (London: HM Inspectorate of Prisons, February 2014); Prisons and Probation Ombudsman, *Deaths of Travellers in Prison*, (London: Prisons and Probation Ombudsman, January 2015); and Independent Monitoring Boards, *Behind Closed Doors 2013: The Sixth Annual Report of The National Council for Independent Monitoring Boards* (London: IMB, 2014), p.17.

33 The Traveller Equality Project has frequently been in attendance at prison events where prison staff including governors have spoken to audiences of Travellers and non-Travellers about the need to address deep-rooted and pervasive racism towards Travellers.

34 Perhaps the best evidence of this change in attitude can be seen in the regular articles written by Traveller prisoners for the quarterly newsletter, TIPN (Travellers in Prison News), published by the Irish Chaplaincy since 2011, available at: http://www.irishchaplaincy.org.uk/Groups/160519/Irish_Chaplaincy_in/Our_Work/Traveller_Equality/Traveller_Equality.aspx

35 See Mac Gabhann and Cottrell-Boyce, *Gypsy and Traveller Prisoners: A Good Practice Guide*, (London: Irish Chaplaincy in Britain, 2013), available at: <http://www.irishchaplaincy.org.uk/Publisher/File.aspx?ID=130347>

Approximately fifty prisons in England and Wales operate a regular Traveller Prisoner Group and/or have a Traveller Prisoner Representative. Traveller Groups and Prisoner Reps are important because they facilitate a line of communication between staff and prisoners and therefore allow for better more suitable services to be developed. The adaptation of services for Travellers has resulted in substantially increased service participation.³⁶

How can increased access to services assist Travellers in the Irish Prison System?

In 2010 the Irish Prison Service estimated that Irish Traveller prisoners represent approximately 9% of the entire prison population in the state.³⁷ Based on this figure, the annual cost to tax-payers of incarcerating this prisoner group is in excess of €23.5 million annually.^{38 39 40} In order to decrease this, it is crucial that recidivism rates are addressed appropriately.

Various studies indicate that prisoners, who have accessed services in custody such as vocational training, literacy courses, behaviour management courses and other interventions are less likely to reoffend. Prisoners who access such services are more likely to find employment upon release.⁴¹ If Irish prisons – the IPS, other state agencies and NGOs – fail to address issues such as literacy, work skills, mental healthcare, addiction and homelessness, then (as evidenced in numerous research reports), an ex-prisoner emerging from an Irish prison will almost inevitably, become a prisoner again.⁴² The state, society, the prisoner and his or her family will, as a result of non-intervention or a lack of specialist service provision, continue to bear the social and economic cost of such recidivism. As Travellers represent a disproportionately high percentage of the prison population, the consequence of non-intervention will have a substantial impact upon this community.^{43 44}

The London-based Traveller Equality Project has found that despite pre-conceptions, Traveller prisoners in general, want to participate in services in order to improve their own situation.⁴⁵ Within the Irish context, it

36 See for example the work at *HMP Ford*, described in *HMP Ford: Model of Good Practice Gypsy, Traveller, Romany*, (HMP Ford, 2014). Available at: <http://www.gypsy-traveller.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/GypsyTraveller-good-practice.pdf>; and also a recent Prison Inspectorate report on HMYOI Cookham Wood observed the type of ad hoc good practice that occurs in prisons: 'In education, Traveller boys were helped with reading, writing and mathematics in a group learning environment' *Report on an unannounced inspection of HMYOI Cookham Wood by HM Chief Inspector of Prisons 5 – 15 May 2015* (London: HM Inspectorate of Prisons, 22 September 2015) p.40.

37 'Travellers accounted for 8.7% of the prison population according to the IPS', *All Ireland Traveller Health Study, Summary of Findings*, (Dublin: University College Dublin, 2010), p.110. Available at: https://www.ucd.ie/t4cms/AITHS_SUMMARY.pdf

38 There are 3,814 people in prison custody in Ireland on 1st March 2016, (Irish Prison Reform Trust). Available at: <http://www.iprt.ie/prison-facts-2>

39 In 2014 the average cost of an "available, staffed prison space" was €68,959, (Irish Prison Reform Trust). Available at: <http://www.iprt.ie/prison-facts-2>

40 Using the most recent figures, 3,814 prisoners cost an average of €68,959 per prison place, and therefore, in total cost approximately €263,009,626.

41 10 47% of prisoners report having no qualifications. This compares to 15% of the working age general population. See Kathryn Hopkins, *The Pre-custody Employment, Training and Education Status of Newly Sentenced Prisoners* (London: Ministry of Justice, 2012) p.14. Prisoners who attend vocational training in prison are more likely to secure employment shortly after release. See Ian Brunton-Smith and Kathryn Hopkins, *The impact of experience in prison on the employment status of longer-sentenced prisoners after release*, (London: Ministry of Justice, 2014) p.3; and Ofsted, *The report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2013/14: Further education and skills*, (Manchester: Ofsted, 2014) p.14.

42 Over 70% of prisoners are unemployed on committal and a similar percentage self-report as not having any particular trade or occupation, according to the Irish Prison Reform Trust, at: <http://www.iprt.ie/prison-facts-2>

43 The total number of Irish Travellers enumerated in April 2011 was 29,573 - accounting for just over half of one per cent (0.6%) of the total population. Central Statistics Office, Cork, available at: <http://www.cso.ie/en/newsandevents/pressreleases/2012pressreleases/pressreleasencensus2011profile7religionethnicityandirishtravellers/>

44 'Based on the IPS estimate of Traveller prisoners, the risk of a Traveller being imprisoned was 11 times that of a non-Traveller', *All Ireland Traveller Health Study, Summary of Findings*, (Dublin: University College Dublin, 2010), p.110. Available at: https://www.ucd.ie/t4cms/AITHS_SUMMARY.pdf

45 See for example prisoner responses in *The Right Type of Education: A Briefing on Education and Training Provision for Gypsy and Irish Traveller Prisoners in England and Wales* (Mac Gabhann, 2015, p.12-17) available at: <http://www.irishchaplaincy.org>

is the task of all stakeholders to create a positive atmosphere and adapt services so that Travellers want to avail of these opportunities.

Summary - Increasing Traveller Participation in Prison-Based Services

- People prefer to access services that show that they are welcomed, understood and valued. Before specific services are considered, prison environments need to manifest that they value Traveller culture and Traveller prisoners. This can be achieved by facilitating Traveller Prisoner Groups, introducing Traveller Representatives, distributing Traveller resources and generally celebrating Traveller culture.
- In order to increase participation by Travellers in prison-based services it is necessary to understand the needs of this group. This requires the establishment of regular communication between prison staff, service providers and Traveller prisoners. This can be achieved by holding regular Traveller Group meetings, introducing a Traveller Rep role, and engaging at all opportunities with this prisoner group about their needs. This allows providers the opportunity to discover how they might adapt current services or introduce different services to more effectively engage with Traveller prisoners.
- Traveller prisoners who have not accessed services such as education or counselling prior to imprisonment have to be encouraged to recognise the need for accessing these services in prison. This can be achieved by discussing the benefits of accessing services in Traveller Groups and in other forums, and normalising the idea of accessing services as something which empowered Travellers do.
- Like all services provided to marginalised communities that are mistrustful of non-community members, prison-based services must be consistent, regular and dependable in order to overcome reluctance. Effective services and initiatives must be available for years rather than occasionally, in order to counter the expectation that Travellers and Traveller service provision are peripheral or somehow expendable.

SECTION 3

STRENGTHENING SUPPORTS FOR FAMILIES OF TRAVELLERS IN PRISON, AND AFTER PRISON, USING A MULTI-AGENCY APPROACH

Effective Support for Families of Traveller Prisoners

Providing support services to the families of prisoners offers significant benefits to the families themselves, prisoners and wider society. Support services for families may include assistance with education, healthcare, housing, transport to/contact with the family member in prison and help dealing with bureaucratic agencies such as prisons, councils, Department of Social Protection and hospitals.

The Primary Benefits of Providing Support to Families of Prisoners

Firstly, by supporting the family of a prisoner, state agencies and NGOs increase the likelihood that the prisoner is incentivised to pursue educational, behavioural and rehabilitative opportunities. A prisoner who is aware that his or her family are safe and secure is more likely to concentrate on their personal rehabilitation. Facilitating a strengthened family circle outside prison also reduces the emotional pressure on the individual prisoner which can inhibit effective rehabilitation.

Furthermore, support services which help to build or retain a strong family network outside prison make it less likely that a prisoner will reoffend because that prisoner has an effective support network upon release. Research emphasises that family and friends are the most important factor in enabling the successful resettlement of an ex-offender upon release. A study in England and Wales found that reoffending rates were 21% higher for people who said they had not received family visits whilst in prison compared to those who had.⁴⁶ Another UK study in 2012 found that 40% of prisoners surveyed said that support from their family, and 36% said that seeing their children, would help them to stop reoffending.⁴⁷ Rehabilitation is in part about creating something worth attaining; by supporting the family network of a prisoner, state agencies and NGOs are facilitating the single most effective rehabilitative resource – family.

Prisoners' families are vulnerable to financial instability, poverty, debt and potential housing disruption. The imprisoned family member may have been the sole money-earner, or emotional support, carer or person who dealt with bureaucratic matters. Without that person, a family can often fall into a spiral of social and financial problems. The provision of support services to a family of a prisoner assists that family through the trauma of losing a member of the family for a period of time. Good service provision for that family helps ensure that they do not become a social or economic burden on society.

Additionally, there is significant evidence that having a parent in prison substantially increases the chances of a child becoming involved in criminality. One study found that parental imprisonment approximately trebles the risk of antisocial/delinquent behaviour in children.⁴⁸ A UK study from 2008, found that the cost of

46 *Bromley Briefings Prison Factfile Autumn 2015*, (London: Prison Reform Trust, 2015), p.29. Available at: <http://www.prisonreformtrust.org.uk/Portals/O/Documents/Bromley%20Briefings/Factfile%20Autumn%202015.pdf>

47 *Bromley Briefings Prison Factfile Autumn 2015*, (London: Prison Reform Trust, 2015), p.29. Available at: <http://www.prisonreformtrust.org.uk/Portals/O/Documents/Bromley%20Briefings/Factfile%20Autumn%202015.pdf>

48 *Bromley Briefings Prison Factfile Autumn 2015*, (London: Prison Reform Trust, 2015), p.30. Available at: <http://www.prisonreformtrust.org.uk/Portals/O/Documents/Bromley%20Briefings/Factfile%20Autumn%202015.pdf>

imprisoning mothers can be extremely high both financially and socially, in particular, the increased likelihood of children of imprisoned mothers becoming 'NEET' (Not in Education, Employment or Training).⁴⁹ Imprisonment carries major costs to families and wider society. If these families who are often vulnerable before a loved-one is imprisoned are not supported to access education, health services, social services and to maintain ties with their family member, they themselves may become part of the problem. Developing consistent and effective support services is not simply the humane thing to do; it is the socially and financially judicious approach to breaking cycles of criminal behaviour.

How have effective support services for families of prisoners been developed in other contexts?

There is no standard range or type of support services that can be offered to families of prisoners. All families are engaged with different services to different extents over time, be it engaging with schools, hospitals or social welfare services. The needs of families vary greatly from one to another. While families who have a loved-one in prison are often in a more chaotic state, they, like all families, have different needs at different times. Therefore, the most effective support services that can be offered to families of prisoners are those which are the most flexible.

In the UK, there are over 360 organisations or projects which assist families of prisoners in a wide variety of ways.⁵⁰ Perhaps the most well-known and effective of these organisations is PACT (Prison Advice and Care Trust), a national charity which supports people affected by imprisonment by providing practical and emotional support to prisoners' children and families, and to prisoners themselves.⁵¹ PACT aims to make the difficult experience of having a family member in prison more manageable. PACT runs visitor centres at six prisons to assist families; they run relationship and parenting courses; they provide advice and information; and provide supervised play at a number of prisons.

In terms of smaller local organisations which support families one of the most effective wraparound service is that provided by ICCM, Irish Community Care Merseyside, a charity, which 'exists to identify and respond to the needs of both the Irish and Irish Traveller communities across Merseyside'.⁵² ICCM offers a range of front-line information, advice and outreach support services including welfare benefits advice and advocacy, support around homelessness, seeking more appropriate accommodation, poor health, drug or alcohol misuse, cultural and social isolation. A number of ICCM Support Workers have regular (key) access to prisons in the Merseyside area while in another strand of their work the same personnel will provide advice to families outside prison. ICCM Support Workers therefore have very effective and trusted relationships with prisoners and with prisoners' families. Advocating for a family with social services, filling out a form for the NHS, lobbying the council for Traveller accommodation or speaking with a solicitor on a family's behalf are some of the various activities that cover 'support services' in terms of this organisation.

The Irish Council for Prisoners Overseas (ICPO) based in London offers similar flexible services to families of prisoners from an Irish and Irish Traveller background.⁵³ Like ICCM, ICPO has a longstanding relationship with prison authorities and individual prisons, and has key access to most of the London prisons, further strengthening the mutually beneficial relationship between this NGO and the prison staff.⁵⁴ ICPO caseworkers

49 *Bromley Briefings Prison Factfile Autumn 2015*, (London: Prison Reform Trust, 2015), p.30. Available at: <http://www.prisonreformtrust.org.uk/Portals/O/Documents/Bromley%20Briefings/Factfile%20Autumn%202015.pdf>

50 See Clinks' directory of family support projects at: [http://www.clinks.org/directory?f\[O\]=profile2_party_org%253Afield_fields_of_work%3A185](http://www.clinks.org/directory?f[O]=profile2_party_org%253Afield_fields_of_work%3A185)

51 More information about PACT (Prison Advice and Care Trust), is available at: <http://www.prisonadvice.org.uk/>

52 More information about Irish Community Care Merseyside (ICCM), is available at: <http://iccm.org.uk/>

53 More information about the Irish Council for Prisoners Overseas, (ICPO), is available at: http://www.irishchaplaincy.org.uk/Groups/160591/Irish_Chaplaincy_in/Our_Work/Irish_Prisoners/Irish_Prisoners.aspx

54 'Gypsy, Traveller or Romany... Prisoners had access to support sessions through the Irish Council for Prisoners Overseas, and a monthly forum had been established in April 2014.' HM Inspectorate of Prisons, Report on an unannounced inspection

specialise in liaising with family members and prisons, helping the family to negotiate the complexities involved in dealing with such a large bureaucratic system. ICPO provides information, advice and support about issues directly related to the imprisonment of a family member such as explaining prison procedure to family members, helping with transport to prison or advocating for compassionate release. However, ICPO family support work also includes issues not directly related to prison issues - matters affecting the maintenance or strengthening of the family unit of a prisoner. For example an ICPO caseworker may advocate on behalf of a family member to NHS, school, council or social services staff, on issues not directly related to the family member in prison, in order to give that family the best possible outcomes.

In terms of family service provision generally, and Traveller families in particular, the most effective services for families are those which are flexible, trusted and empathetic. ICPO and ICCM stand out because they are NGOs which are trusted by prison staff but are, simultaneously, understanding and committed advocates for Traveller families. ICPO and ICCM are successful in supporting families because they are prepared to do all in their power to assist a family in crisis, in a professional and sympathetic manner. Both projects understand that even issues not directly related to prison or an imprisoned family member, affect the life chances of that family and the prisoner. No family emerges from the imprisonment of a loved one unscathed; effective family support services reduce the cost to the family, the prisoner and society.

How can effective support services for families of Traveller prisoners be provided?

Irish Travellers are amongst the most marginalised groups in Irish society. The 2011 Irish Census noted that, 69% of Irish Travellers 'were educated to primary level or lower'; while unemployment in the Irish Traveller community was 84.3% in 2011.⁵⁵ In terms of health, 17.5 % of Irish Travellers had one or more disabilities significantly higher than the general population.⁵⁶

When already marginalised Traveller families are thrown into the further turmoil of having a loved-one imprisoned, the negative impact is likely to be very significant upon those families. Empirical evidence suggests that Traveller families are likely to need more and specialist assistance when a loved-one is in prison. As the consequences of a family member's imprisonment will, generally-speaking, be more significant for this community, it is effective social and financial policy to provide support services to these at risk families.

This report cites the work of ICPO and ICCM with regard to effective family support. However, it should be noted that while both projects work with sizeable numbers of Irish Traveller families, the context in the UK is different to Ireland. In the UK, work with offenders and their families can be more discreet and anonymous than might be the case in the more closely connected communities in Ireland. Community organisations working with Traveller families may face challenges caused by tensions within the Traveller community or hostility from outside the community. Regarding these concerns it is worth noting that in 2010, the London-based Traveller Equality Project was informed by the security department in Wormwood Scrubs Prison that it was reluctant to facilitate a Traveller Prisoner Group as it was concerned about the possibility of feuding. The Traveller Equality Project persisted in that prison and in other prisons where it was felt that there were tensions. In six years of providing services, both inside and outside prison the Traveller Equality Project has experienced no major negative incidences as a result of tensions within the Traveller community. Prison staff, Traveller organisations and individual Traveller may anticipate increased tension as a result of providing greater support services. That is not in itself an argument for not providing such services; rather it is an

of HMP Wormwood Scrubs by HM Chief Inspector of Prisons 6 - 16 May 2014 (London: HM Inspectorate of Prisons, 3 September 2014) p.34 -35.

55 Central Statistics Office, *Census 2011 Profile 7 Religion, Ethnicity and Irish Travellers - Ethnic and cultural background in Ireland*, (Cork, October 2012) p.32 -33, available at: <http://www.cso.ie/en/media/csoie/census/documents/census2011profile7/Profile7EducationEthnicityandIrishTravellerEntiredoc.pdf>

56 Central Statistics Office, *Census 2011 Profile 7 Religion, Ethnicity and Irish Travellers - Ethnic and cultural background in Ireland*, (Cork, October 2012) p.34, available at: <http://www.cso.ie/en/media/csoie/census/documents/census2011profile7/Profile7EducationEthnicityandIrishTravellerEntiredoc.pdf>

argument for managing such services effectively.

While it is important for projects to consider the challenges in providing services both inside prison to Travellers and to Traveller families outside prison, these challenges can be addressed and should not dissuade parties from engaging in this work. Indeed, the starting point of agencies working to support families of prisoners is that the families have not committed a crime; they will suffer as a result of their family member's imprisonment; and to assist that family does not mean that the organisation working on their behalf condones the criminal behaviour of their loved-one. Properly managed family support services which are underpinned by such a starting point will likely overcome any challenges presented in the Irish context by being an independent, non-selective and dependable resource for all potential clients.

Summary - Effective Support for Families of Traveller Prisoners

- Effective support services for families will increase the likelihood that a prisoner will be successfully resettled into the community upon release.
- Families of prisoners are at risk of becoming a social and economic burden on society if effective support services are unavailable.
- Effective support services for families of prisoners are flexible and include in their remit issues not directly related to the custody of a family member. Such support services are underpinned by an understanding that a strong family unit is more likely to positively deal with the crisis brought about by a loved-one's imprisonment.
- Traveller support services for prisoners' families must be clear with both families and prison authorities about their aims and the limits of their work. By removing any ambiguity about the limits or aims of their work, such support services can avoid possible tensions that might otherwise arise and hinder success.

SECTION 4

STRENGTHENING SELF-IDENTITY AND SELF-ADVOCACY FOR TRAVELLERS IN PRISON BY MAINSTREAMING A PEER-SUPPORT MODEL

Real Change Will Be Traveller-Led

Prisons are often hostile environments; many prisoners have serious psychological, physical and educational needs. Indeed, even in a positive prison environment, prisoners face these personal challenges away from the support of family and friends. Prison staff and other state and NGO staff cannot be present for every prisoner 24 hours a day. Improvement in the situation of a prisoner group such as Travellers is more likely to occur when prisoners themselves are engaged to articulate their needs, rights and responsibilities, and that process in turn shapes service provision.⁵⁷

As the most effective rehabilitation is achieved through a prisoner's own determination, prisons must examine what measures can be introduced to challenge prisoners to address both their offending behaviour and other barriers to rehabilitation. Imposing rehabilitation or processes to reduce offending has been demonstrated to be ineffective, hence the abandonment of wholly punitive regimes such as rockbreaking chain-gangs. However, what can work, and has been statistically proven to work with a significant portion of prisoners, are situations in which the system (the prison service and stakeholders) facilitates pathways to rehabilitation which incentivise the prisoner to take responsibility for getting his or her life back on track.

The first step to establishing these pathways is by creating an atmosphere in prison in which the individual and his or her background is considered valuable. In the case of Irish Travellers, an ethnicity that has been persistently marginalised and devalued over a long period, this means actively building a positive Traveller community and promoting self-advocacy within prisons.⁵⁸

A prisoner who is illiterate cannot be forced to learn to read or write. However, when the proper environment is created and suitable course provision is available many such prisoners do avail of the opportunities. This concept also applies to provision of behaviour management interventions, healthcare provision and addiction treatment; prisoners must want to participate and prisons must create positive, suitable opportunities.

Since the introduction of monitoring of Travellers in prison in England and Wales, and the development of more Traveller initiatives, such as Traveller prisoner forums, then so too has engagement by Travellers in services grown. The increasingly positive atmosphere towards Traveller prisoners has meant that Travellers feel as if their voice is being listened to and they are, as a result, increasingly accessing services.

How have Traveller prisoners strengthened self-identity and self-advocacy in prisons in England and Wales? What is the rationale underpinning the introduction of these measures?

The increasing interest amongst Traveller prisoners in the UK in celebrating their identity and advocating on their own behalf has occurred within a positive prison atmosphere which (generally speaking) attempts

57 In prisons in England and Wales, it is common for prisoner representatives from various ethnicities, different religions, different sexualities and different physical abilities to contribute to prison management's diversity policy and practice.

58 One of the most fundamental tenets of effective teaching is to create a positive learning environment where the individual wants to learn. This is not mere waffle; it has a practical purpose which translates easily to the prison context – a learner or participant will only effectively engage with a course or service when he or she feels valued.

to understand and respect them as a distinctive ethnic group. In terms of prisons in England and Wales the strengthening of self-identity and self-advocacy has been facilitated by a number of parties. The National Offender Management Service, HM Inspectorate of Prisons, Prisons and Probation Ombudsman and the Independent Monitoring Board have signalled to individual prisons and prison staff that it is important to respond to the needs of Traveller prisoners. The difficulty, in the early stages of provision for Travellers, being that prison staff frequently didn't know much about Traveller culture other than what was depicted in tabloid newspapers. Likewise Traveller prisoners were unable to access resources such as magazines, DVDs, books or posters in order to give some focus to Traveller Group meetings or events. Indeed, organising and running a meeting, keeping notes and making progress on issues raised in a meeting were often skills that needed to be developed.

A common response to Traveller provision in the early stages of TEP's work was that there were no resources or that the cost of resources or the provision of training to prisons made development impossible. The Traveller Equality Project began by addressing the lack of knowledge on the part of prison staff by providing formal and informal training and advice. TEP also started providing a constant flow of updated resources to staff to improve cultural awareness. In terms of Traveller prisoners, TEP began assisting with the initial stages of setting up a Traveller Group in prisons by giving advice, providing resources and frequently a speaker. Practically speaking, TEP now distributes thousands of resources across prisons in England and Wales each year by post, by email (to diversity and chaplaincy staff) and on visits. Many of the resources were developed by the two-person staff in the Project or were provided free of charge such as the back issues of Travellers' Voice, Travellers' Times and the newsletter of the Parish of the Travelling People.

There can now be no excuses amongst staff for not facilitating a positive atmosphere towards Travellers in prison in the UK. If there are failings or successes in terms of service provision they are highlighted in the regular HM Inspectorate reports^{59 60} Increasingly, Traveller prisoners are regarded just like other ethnic groups in prison, a grouping with a distinctive background and one which should be listened to and should be equally esteemed. Prisons and NGOs such as the Traveller Equality Project are undoubtedly facilitating a change in atmosphere but it is Traveller prisoners who from week to week, and from meeting to meeting, are taking lead roles in advocating for themselves and the Traveller prisoner population.

The approximately fifty prisons that operate Traveller Prisoner Groups and Prisoner Rep roles in England and Wales are only occurring because of Traveller engagement in these initiatives; without their support such initiatives would never exist. Large numbers of Traveller men and women regularly gather in prisons in England and Wales to discuss issues affecting them and also to socialise with one another, such developments and recognition have attracted more and more Travellers to services within prison. Indeed, the most effective Traveller Groups routinely invite staff from different departments in prison such as education and healthcare to speak about and explain their service, which in turn generates more interest in these opportunities in prison.

Travellers in prison in England and Wales recognise that they are an ethnic group with an entitlement to equal access to services as other groups. They also have the forums to advocate to staff regarding service provision. National prison management and individual prisons recognise that if they want to increase Traveller engagement with services there are established and effective ways of achieving this goal. The myth that Travellers are not interested in accessing services or indeed, in engaging with society has been debunked by

59 The Report on an unannounced inspection of HMP Woodhill by HM Chief Inspector of Prisons 14-25 September 2015, states that 'some aspects of provision for Travellers ... were not being implemented or had changed... There was no programme of diversity training for staff' (London: HM Inspectorate of Prisons, 2016), p.35. Available at: <https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmiprisons/wp-content/uploads/sites/4/2016/O3/Woodhill-web2015.pdf>

60 The Report on an unannounced inspection of HMP & YOI Bronzefield by HM Chief Inspector of Prisons 9-20 November 2015 states that: 'The equalities officer saw Gypsy, Roma and Traveller women individually; they had access to the Travellers in Prison news sheet and the prison had useful links to the Travellers Equality Project' (London: HM Inspectorate of Prisons, 2016), p.34. Available at: <https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmiprisons/wp-content/uploads/sites/4/2016/O4/Bronzefield-web2015.pdf>

the upsurge in participation in opportunities and services in prison.

How can measures to strengthen self-identity and self-advocacy improve the situation in terms of Travellers in Irish prisons?

There are two main options to improving the situation of the Irish Traveller prisoner population, either persist with a passive model that simply states all services are available to all prisoners or facilitate the creation of a positive, dynamic and well-resourced environment which promotes Traveller community identity and forums for advocacy.

The first option allows patterns of offending behaviour and issues that prevent successful resettlement to go unchallenged. The offender does his or her time and society hopes for the best. The second option creates an atmosphere where it is normal to aspire to something better; where it is normal to access education courses; where it is normal to access addiction or behaviour counselling. Travellers have been marginalised for generations; consequently, if society wishes Traveller prisoners to become positive contributors to society upon release then the empowerment of this community must be facilitated. While individual prisoners like members of all sections of society may engage in rehab without such a change in atmosphere, these will be the exception rather than the rule. Celebrating, valuing and raising expectations amongst Traveller prisoners of themselves will produce more success stories than the continued working-out of the mainstream media narrative of a disturbed criminal underclass.

The establishment of regular Traveller Group Meetings (with real practice-shaping capacity), the role of Traveller Prisoner Reps and the celebration of Traveller culture in Irish prisons will show institutional respect for Traveller culture. Very quickly, Traveller prisoners will recognise these steps and build upon them to empower themselves and their community.

Summary - Increasing Self-Advocacy amongst Traveller Prisoners

- Sustainable change in terms of Travellers in Irish prisons will only be achieved through the creation of a culture of Traveller-led advocacy. Facilitating Traveller-led advocacy and Traveller advocates in prison means: embedding service provision not as charity but as a right; facilitating Traveller prisoners to run Traveller meetings; allowing Travellers to contribute to service delivery; and generally, ensuring community members have their voices heard and listened to.
- Traveller prisoners are more likely to become Traveller advocates and build a positive Traveller identity in prison within an atmosphere which actively celebrates and protects Traveller culture.
- For Traveller prisoners to want to become Traveller advocates and for them to want to assist in building a strengthened Traveller population in prison, the prison must incentivise individuals by showing that engagement does have benefits. Prisons must introduce opportunities where Traveller culture is celebrated and also where the concerns of Travellers are addressed.
- Regular Traveller Groups, the introduction of Traveller Reps and Traveller celebration events are all examples of initiatives which hand back responsibility to Travellers for shaping their individual, and their community's future.

SECTION 5

INCREASING AWARENESS AND CAPACITY THROUGH TRAINING AND LEARNING PROGRAMMES TO PRISON SERVICE AND PROBATION SERVICE STAFF

Training Prison and Probation Staff to Facilitate Traveller Rehabilitation

Prison and Probation staff, if they are not Irish Travellers themselves, cannot be expected to understand the background that Traveller offenders come from without appropriate training. Without this understanding of Traveller culture, or their experiences of schooling or discrimination, these criminal justice professionals are less likely to be successful in the care, custody and rehabilitation of this prisoner group.

If staff have knowledge and understanding of Irish Travellers they are much more likely to recognise barriers to service provision, such as education or mental healthcare. If staff can identify barriers to service provision they can also help remove barriers and assist in creating more effective rehabilitation opportunities. Moreover, providing staff with training and advice on Irish Travellers will make their work not just more efficient but also less confrontational.

How is training and advice on Travellers delivered to prison and probation staff in England and Wales?

Based on the premise that understanding the communities that one encounters will improve service outcomes and make working with those communities easier, the National Offender Management Service (NOMS) for England and Wales, promotes and distributes information on the diverse groups under the charge of prison and probation services. Prison and probation staff have access to NOMS intranet resources on many diverse groups in order to more effectively engage with these groups. NOMS, individual prisons and local probation services frequently organise training on aspects of BAME custody and rehabilitation.

Specifically in terms of Traveller prisoners, NOMS staff upload resources onto their intranet produced by the Traveller Equality Project such as the quarterly *Travellers in Prison News*, and *Gypsy and Traveller Prisoners: A Good Practice Guide*.⁶¹ NOMS also part-fund the production of the National Prison Radio show *Open Road* which began in 2013. *Open Road*, is an advice, information and entertainment radio programme presented by Traveller prisoners which is broadcast across prisons in England and Wales.⁶²

Perhaps the most effective factor in promoting information on Travellers has been the direct contact of Traveller Equality Project staff with prison staff. Regular visits to prisons around England and Wales, regular correspondence with diversity and chaplaincy staff and the physical posting out of information and guidance on Traveller issues has ensured that staff are generally aware of the main issues affecting Travellers.

The Traveller Equality Project has become the main provider of information and advice on issues affecting Traveller prisoners in England and Wales. This has become the case because TEP is trusted by prison and probation staff and prisoners. As a result, prison and probation staff, on a daily basis, request information and advice from TEP on specific or general issues related to Travellers. TEP staff are regularly invited to speak to Traveller Prisoner Groups and to provide staff training. Indeed, as a result of one probation staff training

61 Mac Gabhann and Cottrell-Boyce, *Gypsy and Traveller Prisoners: A Good Practice Guide*, (London: Irish Chaplaincy in Britain, 2013), available at: <http://www.irishchaplaincy.org.uk/Publisher/File.aspx?ID=130347>

62 'Open Road' in *Inside Time*, (1st July 2014), available at: <http://insidetime.org/open-road/>

session, the Project was commissioned to undertake research on issues affecting Travellers on probation.⁶³ Collaborative approaches such as this - between prison and probation services and organisations like the Traveller Equality Project - are vital because state agencies cannot be expected to have or produce ethnicity-specific material.

In the UK context it has been the experience of the Traveller Equality Project that straight-talking with both prisoners and staff has achieved much. Traveller prisoners are made aware of what can and cannot be achieved in terms of service delivery. Prison and probation staff know that information exchanged will remain confidential and there will be a presumption that prison and probation staff are doing their best. In this context, management are keen to have Traveller Equality Project staff on the wings of their institutions aware that the ultimate aim of this NGO, staff and Traveller prisoners is the same - to increase life opportunities for this prisoner group.

How can training and awareness raising about Traveller issues amongst Prison and Probation Service staff improve the situation of Travellers in Irish prisons?

An effective provider of advice and training on Traveller issues to Irish Prison and Probation Services staff will possess a number of extremely nuanced characteristics. Such a provider will for example, accept that a criminal regardless of his or her ethnicity is responsible for his or her own actions. The provider will, however, articulate the factually indisputable position that the social, economic and political marginalisation of a community within wider society, does increase the incarceration levels of members of that community.

Ultimately, an NGO provider of training to prison and probation staff will only be successful insofar as it balances these two factors - the responsibility of Irish Traveller prisoners to become positive members of society and the responsibility on state agencies to address the historic and continuing marginalisation of this ethnicity. A project which does manage to balance these two issues will be in a position to effectively influence criminal justice policy and practice by being a trusted partner to prison and probation professionals while also being a trusted advocate for Traveller prisoners.

The role of an NGO representing an ethnic group and working in a field such as criminal justice is challenging. Parties can misunderstand the aims or capabilities of such an NGO. Therefore the limits of a project must be made clear to both parties - on the one hand, Irish Traveller prisoners and their families, and on the other hand, the Irish Prison and Probation Services. Traveller prisoners must understand the ultimate aim of an NGO working on their behalf is to achieve equality of opportunity, to enable self-empowerment and to facilitate Traveller prisoners to become Traveller leaders. An NGO representing Irish Travellers in prison especially in the narrower Irish context must be focussed on systemic improvement for all Irish Traveller prisoners rather being dominated by individual issues. Likewise, prison and probation staff must trust an NGO representing Irish Travellers to be fair-minded, dependable and pragmatic, even if very critical when necessary.

⁶³ The research was published as *Working with Gypsy and Traveller Offenders: A Thames Valley Probation Case Study*, (London: Irish Chaplaincy in Britain, 2014). The report is available at: <http://www.irishchaplaincy.org.uk/Publisher/File.aspx?ID=136766>

Summary - Training and Advice for Prison and Probation Staff

- Training and advice on Irish Travellers will allow prison and probation staff to more efficiently deliver services to this group.
- Training all prison and probation staff on Traveller issues and thereby influencing personnel to be sympathetic to issues facing this group in prison and in wider society is likely to impact positively on the everyday care, custody and rehabilitation issues facing Traveller prisoners.
- A project or organisation working with prison and probation staff must comprehend that these individuals have duties as law-enforcement personnel. Furthermore, prison and probation staff are restricted in what they can do, by budgetary limits and internal agency guidelines.
- A project or organisation providing advice and training should recognise that effective collaborative working with prison and probation staff will ultimately benefit Traveller prisoners more than confrontation.

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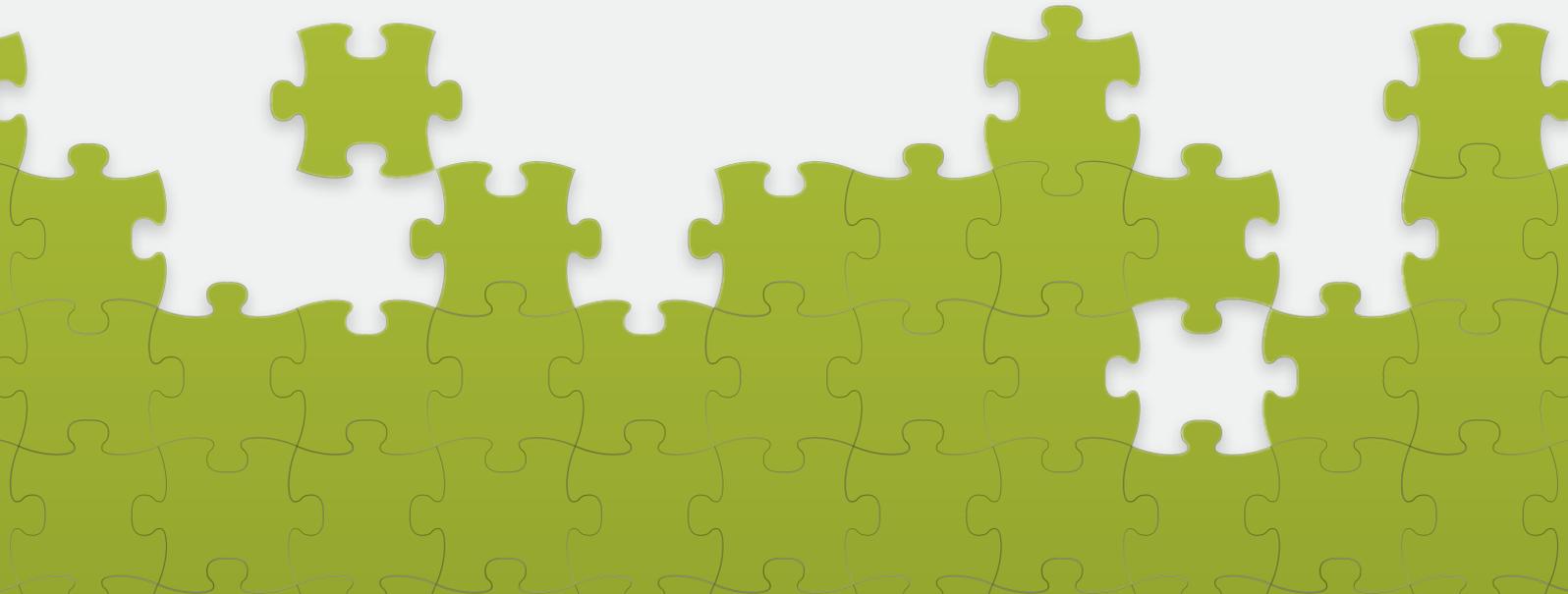
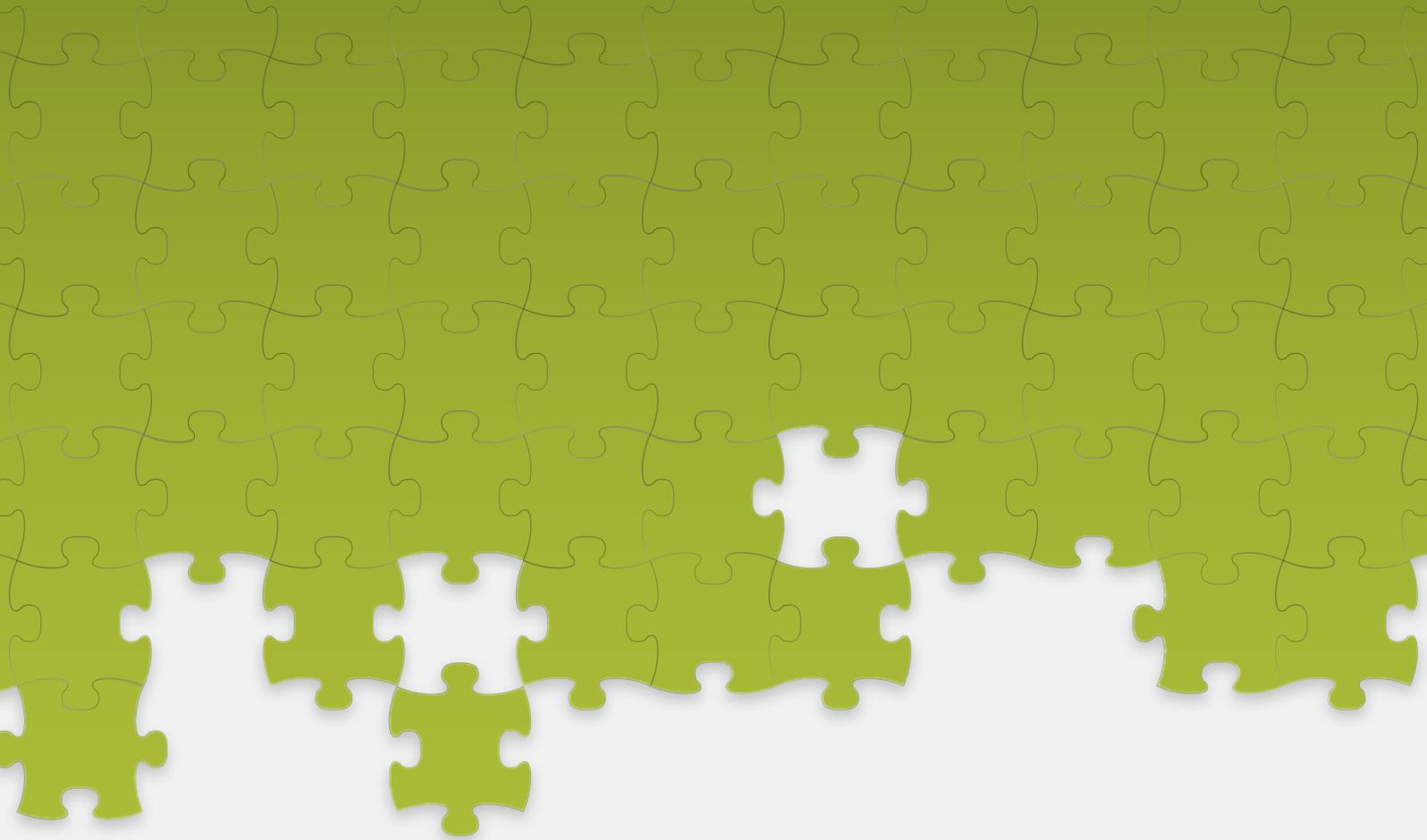
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