

Travellers in Prison Initiative

Summary three year strategic plan April 2021 – April 2024

The overall aim of the TPI is to embed changes in policy and practice that have a positive influence on Travellers in the criminal justice system (prison, engaged with Probation Service and/or post-release), their families and communities. The TPI has identified five key action areas with the potential to inform policy and practice in a pragmatic and sustainable manner.

1. Building a knowledge base about Travellers in the criminal justice system
2. Improving Travellers' access to and outcomes from prison-based services and re-integration supports
3. Advocating for culturally appropriate family support
4. Developing initiatives to promote peer support and advocacy amongst Travellers in prison and in probation services
5. Documenting and sharing the learning of the TPI Initiative

The TPI adopts a model of practice which seeks to 1) identify innovative solutions to challenges, 2) work with key stakeholders in addressing 3) piloting their implementation, and through 4) testing and demonstrating successes of pilot approaches, 5) negotiate their mainstreaming. The approach allows for an innovative and problem-solving approach to be undertaken.

1. Building a knowledge base about Travellers in the criminal justice system

1.1 ETHNIC DATA COLLECTION AND MONITORING

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| Progress to date | TPI has supported the IPS in the introduction of best practice ethnic data collection system throughout the prison system. TPI has worked with Travellers in prison to raise awareness of the merits of self-identifying. |
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Proposed programmes, services, activities and events

- Continue to support IPS to implement EI, and to gather and report data on outcomes for Traveller prisoners
- Train and pilot an ethnic identifier programme with IASIO and Probation Service.

1.2 IDENTIFYING AND RESPONDING TO THE NEEDS OF WOMEN IN THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM

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| Progress to date | TPI commissioned research into the needs of Traveller women in prison (Hearing Their Voices), and into a model of support for Traveller women in the criminal justice system. The TPI has established Traveller Women in Prison advisory group (with participation of Traveller women in prison) to gender proof actions in this strategic plan. |
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Proposed programmes, services, activities and events

- Continue to support the TWIP advisory group to ensure outcomes for Traveller women in prison
- Promote findings and recommendations from 'Hearing their Voices' report to statutory and community and voluntary bodies
- Implement a pilot model for advocacy and support for Traveller women in prison and in the criminal justice system (including post-release)
- Engage with Probation Service and Probation funded organisations regarding the issues facing Travellers post release and Travellers on probation.

1.3 RESEARCH, AND LEARNING FROM OTHER JURISDICTIONS AND SECTORS

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| Progress to date | Gathering data and familiarisation of issues is a key step in the work of TPI. The TPI has undertaken research on its key action areas (Ethnic Identifier good practices; Positive Action in employment) or has worked with partners in progressing and informing research and models of practice. |
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Proposed programmes, services, activities and events

- Commission literature and good practice review, including case studies in other jurisdictions relevant to each of the action areas
- Support the Public Appointments Service in the introduction of positive action measures for the employment of Travellers in the public service (prisoners, ex-prisoners and those without a prison sentence)
- Work with the Social Enterprise Project Manager to develop employment opportunities for Travellers (social enterprise, self-employment and mainstream employment) through the implementation of the 'Working to Change' strategy.
- Support Community Based Organisations to introduce positive action measures for the employment of Travellers
- Support research undertaken by IPRT on Travellers experience of non-custodial sentencing (which will determine if there are issues in accessing and adhering to probation orders).
- Explore how the strategic objectives of other agencies can complement the TPI objectives

2. Increasing and improving access to criminal justice services for Travellers

The focus of TPI initiatives to date has been on: making services more responsive, attractive and culturally acceptable to Travellers and encouraging Travellers participation through peer-support groups and raising awareness about services.

2.1 ENCOURAGING TRAVELLERS PARTICIPATION IN PRISON AND POST-RELEASE SERVICES

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| Progress to date | TPI worked with peer support groups, and developed newsletters and Traveller pride events across the prison estate to promote access to education, and other prison-based services. |
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Proposed programmes, services, activities and events

- Support Traveller peer support group facilitators to encourage Traveller participation in prison-based services and to identify and document barriers and enablers to participation
- Work with existing CBO's to identify services that could be accessed by Travellers post-release or on probation
- Support Travellers engagement through publications (newsletters), Traveller specific literacy resources and content for in-cell TV across the prison estate.

2.2 CREATING AN ATMOSPHERE IN CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM SERVICES IN WHICH PARTICIPATION IS BOTH NORMAL AND POSITIVE

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| Progress to date | TPI has worked with the Education and Training Board in introducing a pilot programme in Dublin prisons to enhance Travellers participation in education. This has included the provision of equality and diversity training to ETB staff. This initiative is being mainstreamed across the prison estate. Worked with Probation Service to develop and deliver training on Traveller inclusion to Probation officers |
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Proposed programmes, services, activities and events

- Continue to work with prisons to promote Traveller inclusion within the prison environment.
- Support development of Traveller appropriate modules and resources (including literacy supports) as part of education service provision

2.3 PROVIDING TRAVELLER INCLUSIVE SERVICES IN PRISON AND POST-RELEASE

| Proposed programmes, services, activities and events | |
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| ▪ | Support the roll-out of the Traveller Liaison Teacher roles across the prison estate. |
| ▪ | Work in partnership with IPS, PS, IASIO and Social Enterprise Project Manager to implement DOJ strategy <i>Working to Change</i> |
| ▪ | Develop a partnership working arrangement with Red Cross and Probation re post-release options for Red Cross Volunteers |
| ▪ | Develop a pilot initiative to explore Travellers inclusion in post-release organisations |
| ▪ | Deliver supports and training on Traveller inclusion for Probation services' staff |

3. Strengthening supports for families of Travellers in prison, and post-release, using a multi-agency approach

Family support is considered to be a particularly important factor in improving outcomes for Travellers in prison and their families and ultimately reducing recidivism. Family support could prove to be a vital intervention at various stages in the criminal justice system.

3.1 SUPPORTING THE FAMILIES OF PRISONERS

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| Progress to date | TPI has contributed to wider models of support for families of prisoners, and has worked with Galway Traveller Movement to gather insights from Travellers in prison and their families about support needs |
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| Proposed programmes, services, activities and events | |
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| ▪ | Continue to work with GTM ¹ in establishing pilot to develop an effective approach to working with families supporting a loved one engaged with the CJS |
| ▪ | Develop culturally appropriate toolkit for agencies supporting families engaged in CJS |
| ▪ | Continue to disseminate IPS and Probation information for families of Travellers |
| ▪ | Develop a resource for families of prisoners |

4. Strengthening self-identity and self-advocacy for Travellers in prison by mainstreaming a peer-support model

4.1 FACILITATING AND RESOURCING TRAVELLER PEER SUPPORT GROUPS

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| Progress to date | <p>TPI piloted peer support groups in four prisons, evaluated the pilot and developed a toolkit & standards for the delivery of peer support. Peer support is now mainstreamed and is funded by the IPS in five sites.</p> <p>TPI supported the development and delivery of a pilot peer mediation programme (Castlerea prison), which has subsequently been mainstreamed across five prison sites.</p> <p>TPI documented the development of a peer-led 'meet and greet' initiative in Castlerea prison.</p> |
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| Proposed programmes, services, activities and events | |
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| ▪ | Work with IASIO to develop new referral pathways for ex-offenders to access supports from peer support facilitators (post-release) |
| ▪ | Work with Red Cross staff to develop a strategy to support meet and greet initiatives across the prison estate |
| ▪ | Develop a model of support (pre-trial and post-release) based on peer support practice |

4.2 REDUCING CONFLICT AND SUPPORTING THE DEVELOPMENT OF SAFER PRISONS THROUGH THE INTRODUCTION OF PEER- MEDIATION IN A PRISON CONTEXT

¹ Galway Traveller Movement

Proposed programmes, services, activities and events

- Support the roll-out of peer-mediation across the prison estate

4.3 FACILITATING AND RESOURCING A NETWORK OF TRAVELLER ORGANISATIONS ENGAGED IN COMMUNITY WORK WITH PRISONERS AND THEIR FAMILIES

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| Progress to date | TPI has engaged with Traveller organisations informally and formally (through network activities and events, and through partnering with Traveller organisations in specific initiatives) |
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Proposed programmes, services, activities and events

- Continue to convene network of all relevant organisations and facilitate sharing of learning and good practice
- Disseminate IPS and Probation information/updates to Traveller organisations

5. Documenting and sharing the learning of the TPI initiative

There is a need to document the process, outcomes and learning points from the TPI Initiative as a key element of the strategy. The TPI should be at the forefront in ensuring that key decision makers (including those not directly involved in the work of the project) are aware of the issues for Travellers in prison and their families.

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| Progress to date | TPI has developed relationships with a range of stakeholders including: policy-makers, Traveller representative organisations, researchers and academics, advocacy organisations, service providers, etc. TPI has hosted a national event, presented at national and international events, supported research, completed submissions, and engaged in high level discussions (senior management and legislative) to shape policy and practice within the criminal justice system and related areas (including family support, employment and enterprise). |
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| Progress to date | Organised a second national conference in 2021 to showcase the TPI work and provide a platform for debating issues Interim and final evaluations completed and findings disseminated. |
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Proposed programmes, services, activities and events

- Maintain effective mechanisms to capture the learning from TPI actions
- Organise regular TPI steering group meetings. Present regular work progress reports to facilitate discussion.
- Co-ordinate meetings of SSGT staff
- Network at relevant conferences/training events. Present project outcomes/learning as appropriate at events

6. Plan for the sustainability of the TPI

The TPI is a pilot programme. The forthcoming strategic planning phase will consider how the initiative can be mainstreamed. The evaluation indicated that there is a preference to continue to locate TPI as a project of the St Stephen's Green Trust. TPI will be re-named to reflect its wider focus.