

# Annual Report **2022**



Traveller Visibility Group

# 1. Chair Person's Statement



Travellers' rights are human rights, but once again this year, in so many ways within Irish society, we have seen how the rights of Travellers are considered less important than the lives and interests of the Settled community. There are examples where Travellers and members of the Settled community join together to fight for common causes. However, as research and reports clearly show, anti-Traveller racism is deeply embedded in all areas of Irish society. Travellers remain violently marginalised and excluded. Institutional racism exists in all areas of state provision, including health, social services, housing, justice, education, and employment services. In both the private and public sectors Travellers remain pushed to the edge of Irish society. TVG staff and volunteers in 2022 have an uphill struggle to ensure that Travellers obtain their basic rights within a country which remains one of the richest in the EU. Anti-Traveller racism is created and sustained by the policies and practices of the Settled community and until the Settled community starts to change, anti-Traveller racism will continue. In this context, TVG has been able to achieve some remarkable successes this year and has been able to develop some new 'allies' within the Settled community.

This year staff at TVG have faced particular challenges in moving away from the Covid restrictions and moving back to face-to-face meetings and developing hybrid forms of inclusive

communication. We have been lucky that we have been able to retain our existing staff and to have recruited number of talented members of the Traveller community. TVG has made progress in all areas of work, including education/ employment, addiction and family support, health, anti-racism and advocacy work, the creche and accommodation. Picking just two of these areas of work, TVG's Goras Community Childcare Centre has grown substantially during the year and provides a wonderful down-town, child-centred, multicultural experience for an increasing number of children and their parents. Second, TVG workers have tirelessly supported Traveller who are homeless. Homelessness has become an increasing problem for Travellers and the issue has now been clearly documented in the Regional Traveller Accommodation Work Group's (RTAWG) report. The RTAWG report provides a good example of how Traveller organisations can collaborate to produce detailed evidence of anti-Traveller racism, and provide a number of solutions and ways forward.

It has been my privilege as a member of the Settled community to be the Chair of TVG's Board of Directors for another year. TVG is a 'Traveller-led' organisation with members of Traveller community being the majority of Directors on the Board. This year there have been no changes to the membership of the Board and we have held our usual regular full Board,

strategy, finance and human resource meetings, as well as participating in numerous TVG events. The Board has successfully reviewed and updated TVG's governance documents in line with the Charity Regulator's new requirements, and helped to introduce improved financial system to ensure more efficient use of TVG's limited financial resources. I would like to thank all the members of the Board of Directors, staff of TVG and volunteers for their commitment and energy in pushing forward the work of TVG.

I would also like to thank, on behalf of the Board of Directors, all the organisations, funders and supporters who make the work of TVG possible. These include: Health Service Executive, Cork City Council, the Traveller Health Unit, Cork Education Training Board, Cork Local Drugs and Alcohol Task Force, Pavee Point, Irish Traveller Movement, Pobal, Solas, University College Cork, Munster Technological University, Cork City Partnership, the Community Foundation, parents of children who attend the TVG Goras Community Childcare Centre, Cork Equal and Sustainable Communities Alliance, local TDs and Councillors, and our fellow Traveller Organisations, especially the Cork Traveller Women's Network. We look forward to the continuing support of our partners and the wider community to continue the essential work of TVG.

**Alastair Christie**

Chair, TVG Board of Directors.

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The key is creating positive pathways for Travellers, opportunities that bring about real positive change and empower our community. **It's not where we came from, it's where we're going** - and Travellers must be at the table when decisions are being made that impact our community - **nothing about us, without us.**

Eileen Burke

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## 2. Director of Advocacy Statement



Work in TVG during 2022 was a mixed bag! The easing of Covid 19 restrictions in the first quarter of the year was a challenge as we were trying to find new ways of working a blended or hybrid setting, with specific timetables to allow for safe working environment and with the focus of getting our team back up and running in person. Everyone in TVG was looking forward to getting out into the community and re-engaging with families and individuals in person.

The team were focused on setting up the community groups off the ground and we faced new challenges here as people hadn't been used to group-work for the bones of 2 years. It took a while to build up trust again and to ensure everyone felt safe getting back into group work and coming out of Covid 19 restrictions. The pandemic hit everyone hard, and the Traveller community in Cork were no different. People found it hard to get back to everyday life, mental health and health in general were issues for the community as a direct result of Covid 19 and people felt cut off from society even further during this time.

2022 was all about celebrating the return to normal life and focusing on areas of work that aim to support the further development of Traveller rights and outcomes in health, education & employment, and accommodation.

I would like to commend the staff of TVG for their hard work in the year, I know it was challenging to return to the office in a hybrid setting and I appreciate that they once again had to change their routines which impact personal and professional life. It has been a pleasure to see so many new faces joining TVG's team and I am thrilled to see so many young Travellers showing an interest in working in this community development project. I would hope that in 2023 and beyond more opportunities will open up for young Travellers in all employment areas.

TVG has a good reputation for working with external agencies, organisations and groups over the years. It was all the important that we could lean on these strong relationships in 2022. During Covid 19 our Traveller allies stood up and supported the community during challenging times. We welcome the return of our collaborative work with these partners in person. It was particularly good to see so many friends of TVG attend our Traveller Pride events and reach out to us to find new ways to collaborate and support the fight for Traveller rights in Ireland. I would like to thank all the friends of TVG who supported and continue to support our work.

**Breda O'Donoghue**

Director of Advocacy.



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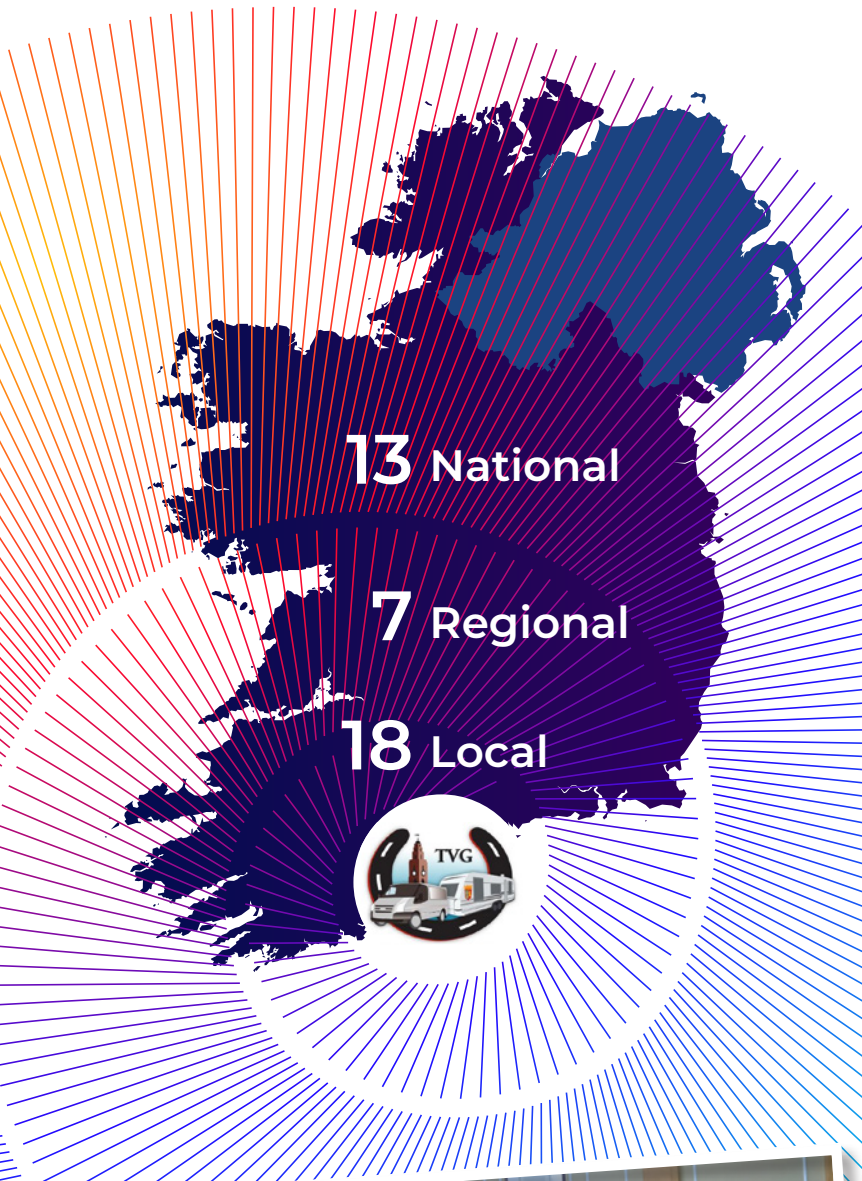
My hope for the future of TVG is that it's not needed, becomes obsolete because all Travellers are being treated fairly, our young people are thriving and we feel at home in our country.

**Biddy McDonagh**

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### 3. Executive Summary



#### Inter-agency Work

TVG participates in **38** local, regional and national committees:

- **18 Local** Committees and Working Groups
- **7 Regional** Committees and Working Groups
- **13 National** Committees and Working Groups

TVG Health Team attended over 30 external events relating to social determinants of health.

#### Public Events

TVG hosted many public events including 5 for Traveller Pride celebrations and further events on accommodation, trauma-informed work, mental health.

#### Traveller Pride Programme and Events



The 2022 Traveller Pride celebrations were a huge success and after a couple of years trying to work online due to pandemic restrictions TVG was able to offer a blend of in-person and online events, keeping Covid 19 health and safety precautions maintained as a priority. A highlight of the festival was a family fun day in Fitzgerald's Park celebrating Traveller culture, heritage and today's Traveller community co-hosted with TVG and the Cork Traveller Women's Network. The event was open to all and saw a mixture of tourists, settled community and Travellers all celebrating and learning about Traveller culture and the importance of family and identity in the park. Events on the day included paper-flower arranging and traditional beady pockets workshops, live music performance from our younger Travellers, performance by Cork Circus Factory, a petting zoo, food stalls and trips to the Traveller Culture exhibition in Cork Public Museum. We wanted to celebrate the rich Traveller history and tradition in Cork and Ireland while also celebrating the broad Traveller culture of today.

Further Traveller Pride events included the annual flag raising of Cork Travellers' emblem over Cork City Hall, a webinar with Cork Community Art Link and Cork Community Arts Officer to the wider arts world on community engagement in art projects and reflecting on the TVG Mural Project, the launch of the Hazel Tree film with local film makers Frameworks, celebrating the heritage of the hazel tree in traditional Traveller life.

TVG teamed up with our friends at APC Microbiome Ireland and UCC to deliver a presentation and video on the fascinating research findings on the unique Traveller microbiome that has impacts for the international medical and scientific world and highlights the need to support and develop culturally appropriate services to improve both physical and mental health outcomes for the Traveller community.

A highlight from the NTRIS STAR Education team was delivering a successful Cant language and spoken word workshop with young Travellers celebrating Traveller traditional language with contemporary music and poetry.





## Healthy Ireland: Keeping Young Travellers Well Event

TVG launched a report funded by Healthy Ireland on the impact of discrimination on young Travellers' mental health. This event was held in Cork City Council buildings and included a screening of an animated video produced by TVG that provided a summary of the findings and voice for young Travellers. The TVG report provides recommendations for youth services, on how to make services more inclusive and culturally appropriate for young Travellers. The event was introduced by Lord Mayor of Cork followed by presentations by Senator Eileen Flynn Maria Elana Costa Sa and Patricia Munatsi, INAR and a number of TVG workers. The event was very well received, with a full audience of over 50 people in attendance. Over 70 copies of the report were delivered to relevant stakeholders and services.

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Our rich culture and heritage can be preserved and celebrated by the mobilisation, participation and collective action of our Traveller people. We have great leaders and strong heritage and we need everyone to come and stand in solidarity as a whole community approach.

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**John O'Sullivan and Patrick McDonagh**



## A Hidden Crisis: Traveller homelessness in the South West Report Launch Event (RTAWG)

TVG is an active member of the Regional Traveller Accommodation Working Group (RTAWG) which includes representatives from the 6 Cork and Kerry Traveller organisations along with a dedicated RTAWG project worker and together we launched a well received event and discussion on their research on Traveller homelessness. This important report provides an overview of the structures in place for providing Traveller-specific accommodation, explores the causes of the Traveller accommodation crisis and highlights the impact of hidden homelessness on the Traveller Community.

The report was launched by Senator Eileen Flynn, and speakers and presenters on the day included Dr Samantha Williams (Traveller Equality and Justice Project, UCC), Brigid Carmody (Cork Traveller Women's Network), Brigid Quilligan (Kerry Travellers Health & Community development Project), Dr. Rory Hearne (Dept. Applied Social Studies, Maynooth University) and Brian Harvey (Independent Social Researcher) among others. Due to Covid 19 restrictions this event was held online and attended on the day by 177 guests receiving 95,656 Twitter impressions from RTAWG posts alone.

## Accommodation Workers Highlights

Supported **75 number of families** (representing 225 approx individuals) with accommodation issues.

Co-produced a report on Traveller Hidden Homeless with **177 people** attending the launch.

Delivered **5 national submissions** impacting Traveller accommodation.

Supported **3 different WRC cases** relating to Traveller accommodation in 2022.

## Education and Employment Team Highlights

Worked with **115 Traveller** children and their families across **14 schools** in Cork City.

Delivered **2 successful public Safe Pass courses** to Travellers in Cork.

Set up a **welding and construction skills training course** with ETB and TVG along with young Traveller men from across Cork.

Set up a **Young Women's Group** focusing on training and career development opportunities in Cork.

## Health Team Highlights

Worked with **5 Women's Groups** across Cork reaching up to 50 individuals including a new group led by our Domestic, Sexual and Gender Based Violence Workers.

Worked with **over 300 women** in 2022 through group work, at public events and in 1:1 and family support work.

Traveller Men's Health Development team worked with **73 men** and support **4 Traveller men's groups** across Cork City.

Created a **mental health information video** for young Travellers detailing the findings of a published report by TVG health team on young Traveller's mental health.



# TVG Traveller Advocacy and Anti-Racism Work

In 2022 TVG staff worked directly with Government departments and political party leaders to advocate for Traveller rights, to combat anti-Traveller racism and seek equality and equity in health, accommodation and education outcomes for Travellers.

In 2022 TVG formally met with the following national and local Government leaders and state bodies:

- An Taoiseach, Leader of Fianna Fail
- Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth of Ireland
- Minister for Public Health, Wellbeing and the National Drugs Strategy
- Leader of Sinn Fein
- Sinn Fein’s spokesperson for Housing, Local Government and Heritage.
- Labour’s spokesperson for Education and Justice
- Chair of the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Key Issues affecting the Traveller Community, and first ever Traveller to be appointed to the Seanad.
- The Office of the Children’s Ombudsman
- The Chief Executive of Cork City Council
- Cork City Traveller Accommodation Unit (TAU)
- Traveller Inter-Agency Group (Cork City)
- Specialist Social Inclusion Staff at HSE and Cork City Council



## National Publications and Submissions

Regional Traveller Accommodation Working Group’s published report “A Hidden Crisis: Traveller homelessness in the South West” (Jan 2022)

Submission to the Department of Housing on Youth Homelessness (Mar 22)

Submission on the Mid-Term Review of the Cork City Traveller Accommodation Programme to Cork City Council, the Department of Housing and the NTACC (Aug 22)

Submission to the Department of Public Expenditure & Reform on the Review of the Freedom of Information Act (Aug 22)

Submission to the Housing Commission on a Right-to-Housing Referendum (Sept 22)

Published report “Healthy Ireland: Impact of Discrimination on Young Travellers Mental Health” (Oct 22)

## Traveller Advocacy and Anti-Racism Work Highlights

In 2022 a TVG worker achieved a QQI Level 6 Anti Racism and Advocacy Training supported by FLAC and INAR. That worker can now support Travellers taking claims of discrimination to the Workplace Relations Commission (WRC). The worker has learned how to put together and present a case to the WRC on behalf of someone who has been subjected to racial discrimination in employment or in accessing goods and services. Please contact TVG if you would like to know more or gain support for a personal case through this worker.

TVG continues to stand in solidarity with people of all identities, races and ethnicities who are victims of racism and discrimination. We march in solidarity with our friends who might experience discrimination at Cork Says no To Racism rally every March. In 2022 we returned to in-person demonstrations and it was great to take to the streets and raise awareness of Cork’s collective promotion of inclusion, anti-racism and diversity in our city. Nationally our campaign work saw TVG attend a national housing crisis protest “Raise the Roof” in Dublin along with a national campaign calling for support and and government intervention into the Traveller mental health crisis.



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## NTRIS STAR Education Pilot

TVG is one of 4 education pilot locations across Ireland that have been working with TUSLA, Department of Education, local schools and Traveller and Roma students and their families to find working models to improve outcomes in education for the Traveller and Roma Communities. The project started in January 2020 and has been extended to June 2024. TVG have 2 education workers who go to 14 different schools and work with schools, students, and their families.

In 2022, along with the weekly support to students in school the NTRIS STAR team participated in 6 additional projects:

- Children's music workshops with Music Generation and the support of Cork Local Creative Youth Partnership
- Homework and Afterschool Clubs
- Completed the "Write a Book Project" with Kids Own Publishing and we hope to see these books on Traveller and Roma children's lived experiences published and in classrooms in 2023
- Traveller and Roma Pride Week workshops.
- Attended the Anti-Bullying launch

The STAR Education team ran a successful summer programme with many activities and outings with over 100 young people. The project workers brought groups to UCC and also to a national event with, National Youth Council of Ireland (NYCI) to participate in implementing policy. The young Roma and Traveller girls took part in the Better future Brighter Outcomes workshops to ensure young minorities have a say in future policy.

## Anti-Bullying Policy Launch

During the summer holidays the Department Of Education visited the TVG to meet some young STAR Roma and Traveller students to discuss their experiences in school. Following this focus group our young people both Roma and Traveller were invited to the launch of the Anti-Bullying Policy document at the Visilbilty GroupAviva Stadium and also played a part in implementing this through young minorities voices at the event. Some of our young people attended and took part in a discussion with the Minster for Children on the day and met with the Education Minister on the day too. It was a fantastic opportunity for our young people.



A selection of photographs from various events throughout 2022...





## TVG Goras Community Childcare

2022 was another busy year for our early years education team. The centre runs morning and afternoon creche and preschool services which have been at capacity throughout the year. It's a creative and engaging space which welcomes children from diverse cultures and backgrounds with many of the children coming from the Traveller community. It's wonderful to have such a friendly, multicultural space in the city centre.

The team are supported by Cork City Childcare and collaborate with 'Let's Grow Together' and 'Happy Talk' to ensure that we are always developing our service for the benefit of the children who come to learn through play in our centre. Highlights in 2022 were running a pyjama day fundraiser for local children's charities, attending a Christmas Party at "The Foyer" in Blackpool and being selected to take part in a pilot programme to provide a range of meal options to children, including the provision of hot meals in our creche and preschool. This service will begin in 2023.



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Education is hugely important in the Traveller community, and we try to cultivate a sense of belonging for all the children coming in to use the crèche and preschool. All cultures and communities are welcomed and celebrated here so that children can play and learn together confidently in a safe and welcoming environment.

Eileen O'Shea

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## 4. Board of Directors and Staff

### List of TVG Board of Directors 2022:

Alastair Christie	<b>Chair and Secretary</b>
Aideen Creedon	<b>Treasurer</b>
Siobhan O'Donoghue	
Chris McDonagh	
Jason Sheehan	
Cora Williams	
Leanne McDonnagh	
Margarita O'Driscoll	

### List of TVG staff 2022:

Breda O'Donoghue	<b>Director of Advocacy</b>
Eileen O'Shea	<b>Director of Operations</b>
Mary Coughlan	<b>Project Administrator</b>
Sarah McCarthy	<b>Assistant Administrator</b>
Joanne Healy	<b>Assistant Administrator</b>
Tehmina Kazi	<b>TVG Traveller Health Coordinator</b>
John O'Sullivan	<b>Men's Health Development Worker</b>
Patrick McDonnagh	<b>Traveller Men's Strategy Intern</b>
Thomas Erbsloh	<b>Development Worker</b>
Elizabeth McGrath	<b>Women's Health Development Worker</b>
Biddy McDonagh	<b>Traveller Community Health Worker</b>
Jean Donoghue	<b>Traveller Community Health Worker</b>
Nora Cash	<b>Traveller Community Health Worker</b>
Eileen Burke	<b>Traveller Community Health Worker</b>
Maria Stokes	<b>Domestic &amp; Sexual Gender Based Violence Worker</b>
Noreen O'Reilly	<b>Domestic &amp; Sexual Gender Based Violence Worker</b>
Ann Jordan	<b>Community Drugs and Alcohol Worker</b>
Lauren Byrne	<b>Interim Community Drugs and Alcohol Worker</b>
Amanda O'Donnell	<b>Traveller Peer Drugs and Alcohol Worker</b>
Anne Burke	<b>Education Coordinator</b>
Rachel Coffey	<b>Traveller Education Worker</b>
Gina Miyagawa	<b>Roma Education Worker</b>
Rachel Hurley Roche	<b>Roma Education Worker</b>
Gemma Lewsley	<b>Childcare Manager</b>
Susan Mannion	<b>Childcare Team Leader</b>
Jemma Caughlan	<b>Childcare Worker</b>
Shauna Kiely	<b>Childcare Worker</b>
Jessica Varian	<b>AIMS Support Childcare Worker</b>

### Community Employment Scheme 2022:

Helen O'Connor	<b>Receptionist</b>
Shannon O'Driscoll	<b>Receptionist</b>
Katieann Stokes	<b>Receptionist</b>
Josie Heaphy	<b>Housekeeper</b>
Ray Manning	<b>Caretaker</b>
Bernadette O'Donoghue	<b>Community Development Worker</b>
Maryanne O'Donoghue	<b>Community Development Worker</b>
Joanne Healy	<b>Childcare Admin Assistant</b>
Chelsea Kelleher	<b>Childcare Assistant</b>
Eve Broderick	<b>CE Scheme Childcare Assistant</b>

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We like working in a place with a mix of Travellers and Settled people. We learn from them and they learn from us. There's not many places like that.

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**Helen Connors and Katieann Stokes,**  
Traveller CE workers in TVG





## 5. Acknowledgements

We would like to thank all our funders throughout 2022 including:

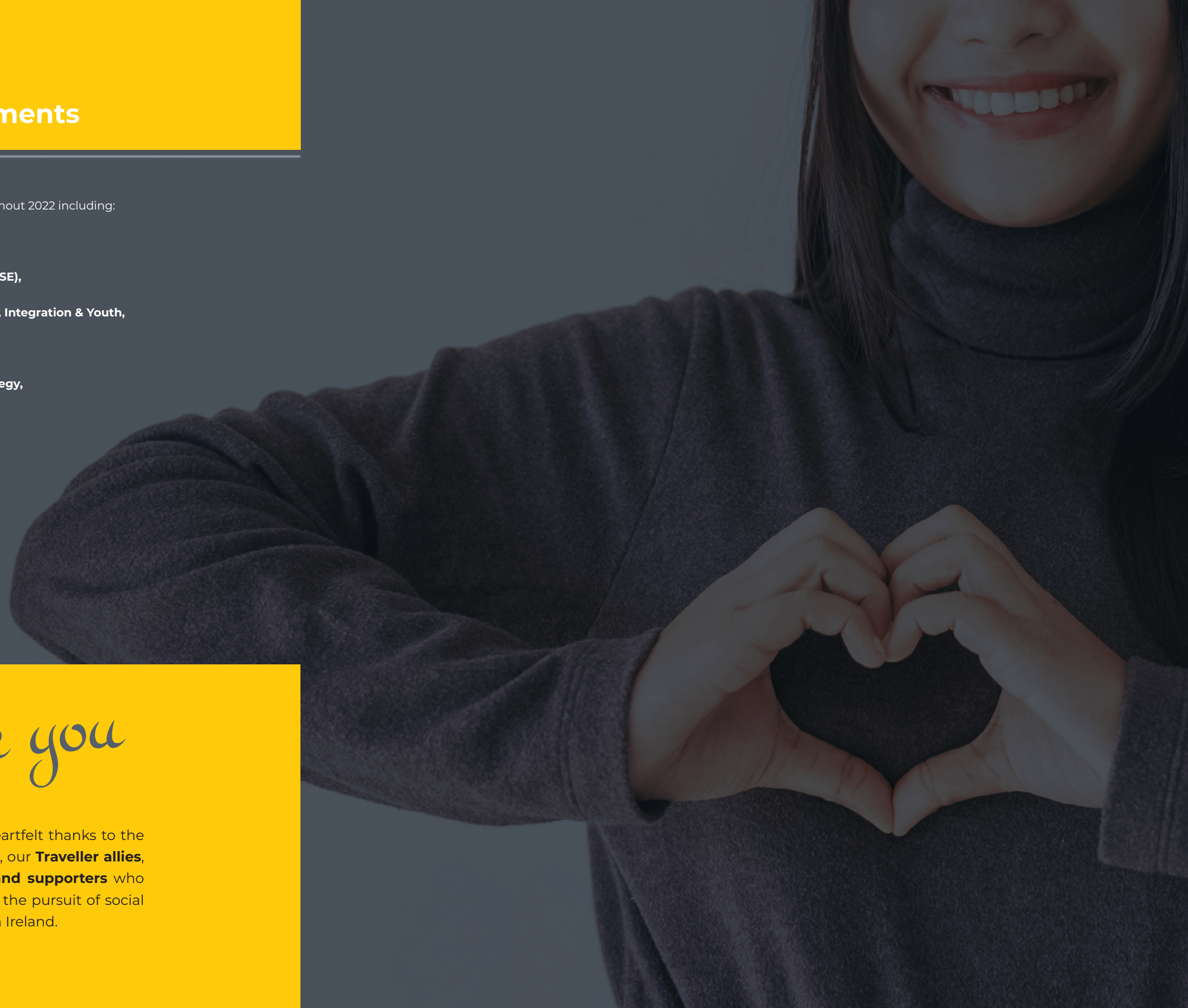
**Community Foundation Ireland**  
**Cork City Council,**  
**Cork Education Training Board,**  
**Cork Local Drugs and Alcohol Task Force (HSE),**  
**Creative Ireland,**  
**Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration & Youth,**  
**Department of Education,**  
**Department of Justice,**  
**Healthy Ireland,**  
**National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy,**  
**Pobal,**  
**Social Inclusion (HSE),**  
**Traveller Health Unit (HSE).**

A special thank you to the **UCC Social Work students** who joined us as part of their professional placement requirements.



# Thank you

And of course, our heartfelt thanks to the **Traveller community**, our **Traveller allies**, our **friends, family and supporters** who join us in solidarity in the pursuit of social justice for Travellers in Ireland.







## Traveller Visibility Group

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