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Acronyms

CDB	County Development Board
DJELR	Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform
HLG	High Level Group
HSE	Health Service Executive
TIG	Traveller Interagency Group

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Introduction

Acknowledging the continuing impact of multiple disadvantage on Traveller life opportunities, the local Traveller Interagency process was initiated on a countrywide basis by government in 2006, in the expectation that more integrated service delivery would lead to improvement. The new policy was implemented through newly established Traveller Interagency Groups (TIGs) in each local authority area, which included members from the statutory/state and community/voluntary sector, as well as representatives of the Traveller community.

At the request of the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform (DJELR), which has oversight of Traveller Interagency Groups, Pobal has been involved in monitoring the Traveller Interagency Process over the past three years. This information pack is based on learning over that period. It is intended to give TIG members an overview of the process, stimulate discussion and assist in developing good practice.

The information pack is laid out as follows:

Section 1 outlines the background to the interagency process

Section 2 examines the rationale for engaging in interagency work around service delivery to Travellers.

Section 3 examines the impact of collaborative projects on the TIG process.

Section 4 traces the development of the Interagency Process.

Section 5 identifies some key factors in the success of TIGs.

Section 6 is a list of recommendations based on monitoring of TIG progress.

Section 7 contains a set of tools for communication and planning on TIGs.

The appendices contain a listing of projects funded by the Traveller Fund and reports on two sample projects.

1. Development of the Traveller Interagency Process

High Level Group

In 2003, a High Level Group (HLG) on Traveller issues was established as a sub-committee of the Senior Officials Group on Social Inclusion reporting to the Cabinet Committee on Social Inclusion. Its remit is to “ensure that the relevant statutory agencies involved in providing the full range of services to Travellers, would focus on improving the integrated practical delivery of such services”.

The HLG Report was published in 2006. Its aim was to find ways of securing better outcomes for Travellers and improve the use of the “considerable” resources, allocated across Government Departments for Traveller-specific measures. It, therefore, sought life improvements and financial savings in parallel. The report emphasised the HLG’s view that interagency cooperation between statutory bodies is the cornerstone of enhanced service delivery, identifying it as a priority issue. It recommended that the 34 local authority areas develop a strategic plan to implement a coordinated interagency approach. It also recommended that the County Development Board (CDB) structure, which possesses a statutory basis and on which the most relevant agencies are represented, would be used to facilitate the development of the plans and to oversee their implementation. While the emphasis above is on statutory collaboration, the report elsewhere stresses the importance of community involvement.

The central recommendations of the HLG Report were as follows:

- to establish a coordinated interagency strategy for the delivery of services and supports for Travellers in all cities and counties with a Traveller population. Existing structures such as the City and County Development Boards should, as far as possible, be used to develop and monitor implementation of county action plans;
- to actively promote effective consultation with Travellers at national and local level in helping to deliver the interagency approach, and in facilitating better communications, including conflict resolution and
- to ensure that law enforcement is included as part of the proposed integrated approach.

Monitoring of the ongoing implementation of the report is carried out by DJELR, which has a coordinating role in relation to policy on Travellers. Pobal assists in monitoring the process, advising TIGs and disseminating learning.

Pilot stage of the Local Traveller Interagency Process

In 2004 two areas, South County Dublin and Clare, later identified as progressive in the HLG report, were selected as pilot interagency groups, to look at mechanisms for implementing existing prioritised actions at local level. No standardised guidelines were issued to either group.

In mid-2005, a further 8 pilots commenced in Offaly, Cork City and County, Galway City and County, Limerick City and County and Waterford City and County. In addition, a small number of local authority areas decided to engage independently in the process, even though they were not funded as pilot groups, concentrating on building relationships, establishing baseline data and designing a viable strategy. Following the requirement for each local authority area to devise a Traveller strategy in 2006, a formalised interagency approach to Traveller affairs became widespread. While the chairperson of the TIG was not always the Director of Services of Community and Enterprise, the CDB, in all cases, played a lead role in initial organisation and in initiating design of a county strategy.

2. Interagency Rationale

Three key findings of the HLG report, provide the generative point for the interagency process:

- the growing realisation of service delivery failure in relation to Travellers;
- the acceptance that Travellers must be able to engage on an equal footing, if improvement is to occur and
- the realisation that practical solutions to service deficits must occur at local level.

The interagency approach is an attempt to build on the recognition that public service providers had failed to adapt to the distinct issues that face Travellers, as outlined in the 1995 Task Force Report, and that barriers to implementation and access across a range of public service areas remain for the Traveller community.

This failure has continued to manifest itself through quality of life indicators such as low levels of life expectancy, poor educational attainment, poor living standards and high levels of unemployment, among others.

Historically fragile relationships between statutory agencies and Travellers and Traveller organisations had tended to make service improvements problematic and had created disillusionment and distrust between Travellers and the statutory sector. Where implementation of promised interventions was incomplete as in accommodation provision, it had led to worsening relationships, perpetuating a cycle of poor access to services.

The interagency approach changes the focus from individual organisations attempting to, often unsuccessfully, provide distinct services, to a collaborative approach between providers, in cooperation with Travellers, based on the needs and life cycle of Travellers. For instance, it is clear that interventions in relation to one area, such as employment, are limited by educational attainment, which in turn, is affected by a range of other issues such as pre-school opportunity, accommodation and health. Also, service providers had ignored or failed to adequately address a number of cultural issues, particular to the Traveller Community, such as nomadism and the centrality of horse ownership. National policy in relation to most areas of service delivery is comprehensive and many Traveller-specific resources are in place. However, results have often not been commensurate with investment. The HLG Report explicitly recognises that policies drafted at one spatial level (national) need to be customised in their delivery to reflect circumstances at another (local) level. The Report had a dual objective: to improve access to services and to remove duplication.

Among the anticipated advantages of the interagency approach, as proposed in the Report are:

- better access and take-up of services because of client participation and greater understanding of people as well as issues;
- better communication and building of organisational understanding about the interdependence of service areas;
- greater coordination because of networking of frontline personnel and decision-makers, resulting in rationalisation of activity, pooling of information and removal of duplication;
- innovation through mingling of perspectives;
- learning in partnership, resulting in seamless dissemination and
- recurring opportunities to map out an array of implementation issues, to examine their feasibility, and to accurately identify capacity and resources.

3. The impact of the Traveller Fund on TIG progress

The purpose of the Traveller Fund - The Traveller Interagency and Communications Fund - is to give additional impetus to the work of Traveller Interagency Groups in developing the mechanics of better service delivery, in the context outlined in Section 1.

DJELR, which is responsible for monitoring the ongoing implementation of the HLG Report, established the fund to support projects targeting the Traveller community, delivered on an interagency basis. There have been three rounds to date but further funding is not expected. Current Round 3 projects will continue up to December 2011. Many actions from TIG strategies around the country have been aided by the Fund. Funded Projects are listed in Appendix 1.

A total of c. €3.5 million has been made available over the period from 2006-2011, funding a total of 47 projects. They have addressed a wide range of Traveller issues, including

- Family health education;
- School transition, after school support and family support around schooling and children's health;
- Adult development, often with a separate focus for men and women;
- Networking and building of Traveller representative capacity;
- Youth development;
- Employment and training for employment;
- Multi-cultural awareness training and community integration and
- Accommodation and tenancy support.

Only CDBs or nominated statutory agencies could apply to the Fund. The rationale for insisting on statutory agencies leading project applications was to ensure their participation in managing community projects, with the joint objects of increasing statutory sector access to community sector learning and making statutory expertise available to community and Traveller organisations. Experience during Round 1 showed that this requirement was justified as a small number of local authorities sought to devolve project control and management onto community organisations. Inter-sectoral cooperation was reinforced by the requirement that a project steering group, reporting to the TIG, be established, to include statutory and community input as well as local Traveller representation.

Impact of the Traveller Fund

A major focus of the Fund was to stimulate interagency activity. Innovation was prioritised in the guidelines and the project assessment procedures. Innovation took place, primarily, through the establishment and operation of the new interagency structures as well as introducing new ways of conducting intra-group communication and embedding accountability. The collaborative process necessary to design applications and deliver projects brought greater visibility of local Traveller issues and of their inter-dependence.

The Fund has to date brought considerable returns for a fairly minimal investment:

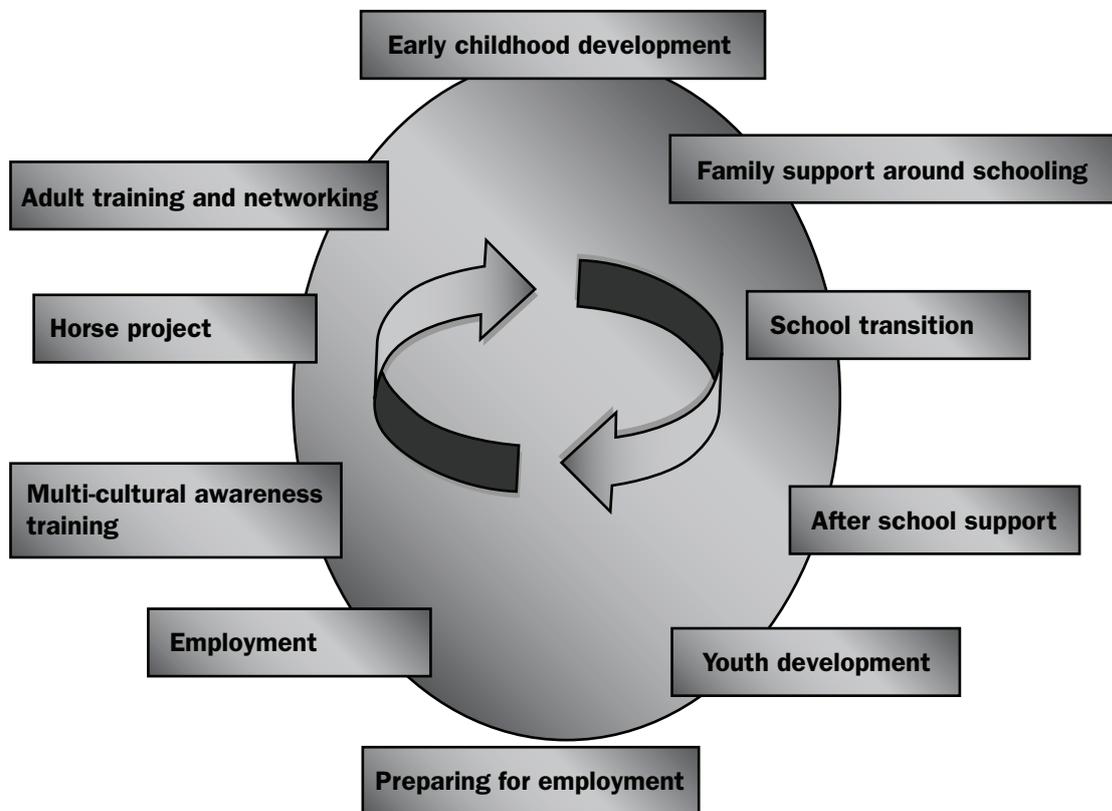
1. The requirement of the Fund that applications be for priority actions linked to the county Traveller strategy stimulated those TIGs that had not engaged with the new process to formulate a strategy and commence cross-organisational communication.
2. The requirement for a Traveller presence on project steering groups led to engagement with local Traveller representative groups, where this had not happened.
3. Several promising projects were initiated with DJELR funding. (See Appendix 1 for a full list of projects and Appendix 2 for reports on two sample projects.)
4. The new focus in government strategy on developing local structures capable of progressing service delivery issues to Travellers was given greater visibility;
5. Finally, through the combined application, development and reporting processes, considerable information on the process has been amassed.

Limitations of the Fund

While the short-term funding provided by the Traveller Fund has helped stimulate activity and allows innovative ideas to be put into practice, it can also have negative consequences. The most consistent criticism by beneficiaries has been in relation to the inability to sustain actions long enough to make a meaningful social impact. Several felt strongly that embarking on projects which had no prospect of continuation or of mainstreaming could be counter-productive. The timescale of one year for projects in the first two rounds of the Traveller Fund (two years in Round 3, Strand 1) was reported by every beneficiary as too short to definitively establish project value. Many also pointed to the added disadvantage of raising and then dashing expectations by establishing and then removing an effective service. The suggested minimum project length has generally been between three and seven years but, for greatest impact, should be related to the stage of Traveller life-cycle (Figure 1) at which it is targeted. Thus, the Sligo Lifestart early childhood development project (Appendix 2) which develops parental knowledge of the stages of child development from birth until entry into

the primary school system, would require a minimum of five years funding before it could achieve its desired outcome or even be realistically evaluated.

Figure 1: Addressing the Life Cycle of Travellers in TIG Strategies (adapted from Chris Mc Inerney)



Although it had been explained in the guidelines and at information meetings, prior to application, that projects needed to be mainstreamed locally and commitment to mainstreaming was, indeed, an application requirement, it is clear, in retrospect, that TIGs had an expectation that continued funding would, somehow, be provided by DJELR. As a response to representations, DJELR provided €320,000 to allow promising Round 1 projects to continue for a further year and approached the Dormant Accounts Fund for funding in Round 3, thereby allowing projects in that round to continue over a two year period.

The Fund's assessment process, which attempts to distribute limited resources fairly through a competitive process, contributes to the establishment of projects of high quality, which are then closely monitored but there can be negative effects. Failure to acquire funding led to disillusionment with the interagency process in some cases, as illustrated by the withdrawal of representatives of the education sector from one TIG following rejection of their Round 1 application. It is important that, where there are negative consequences, they are countered by expressions of support from national level.

In addition, failure on the part of individual local organisations to have their projects prioritised for application to the Fund by a TIG can contribute to diminished participation. This is compounded where funding is secured for the chosen project but outcomes are poor.

Sustainability

Lack of sustainability remains the greatest threat to progress. Serious questions need to be asked about strategy in relation to funding pilot actions without giving due consideration to provision of mainstreaming mechanisms. Project reports indicate a strong connection between sustainability of projects and sustainability of general TIG activity. Collaborating around actions is the cornerstone of interagency work and for several TIGs, funded collaborative projects have been the main binding force. At a number of recent interagency meetings, the question arose as to whether there was any point in continuing to meet, in the absence of such projects. The need for achieving successes regularly, however small, has been cited as a primary driving force of interagency activity by many TIG members.

Nevertheless, some TIGs that have taken a decision to undertake deliberately limited actions in the absence of funding have had considerable success in maintaining structures which improve service delivery and have made a strong impact through collaboration and information exchange of frontline staff and through regular interaction of senior agency and organisation personnel.

National Obstacles to Mainstreaming Projects

The stimulating effect of the Traveller Fund on interagency work is perceived by many TIG members as being partially undermined by the absence of an adequate national strategic framework. The crux of the matter is that most agencies and government departments, while encouraging pilot projects and expressing encouragement for interagency work, have not established a mainstreaming strategy for pilot projects and have not yet come to terms with the need for change in this respect, if an interagency approach is to be the preferred pathway for effecting social change in relation to Travellers. Clearly, statutory agencies and government departments have to work to their brief and spend appropriately, but, despite the policy emphasis on integrated service delivery, there has been insufficient consideration of how funding should be differently allocated to allow this to happen. Greater interagency and inter-sectoral cooperation is required at national level to stimulate progress at local level.

4. Development of TIGs

While significant progress has been made, some TIGs have encountered difficulties and have had to re-group, underlining the novelty of the process, the difficult issues involved and the need for support and incentivisation. To their credit, most of those which have faced serious challenges have proved resilient and made progress towards re-establishment, although the process in two TIGs is far from complete. At least one TIG has completely ceased meeting. Where there was decline, the most important internal contributory factors were dissension between the statutory and community sectors and poor statutory sector participation. However, other factors such as Traveller Community divisions also contributed in certain cases.

A number of TIGs encountered problems in maintaining organisational relationships, as disagreements arose between those with a community development approach and those focussed on prompt service delivery. While the two approaches are not incompatible, disagreements arising from entrenched positions have sometimes impeded progress. Disagreement was sometimes heightened by the polar opposites of, on the one hand, unwillingness to relinquish prior ownership of Traveller interventions and, on the other, lack of commitment of certain organisations or agencies.

Other challenges to the progress of TIGs include :

- The processes of convening meetings, minuting, progress evaluation and general administration, including compiling funding applications, are causing difficulties for many TIGs as there is no dedicated person to undertake the tasks which, therefore, usually have to be performed by the administrative staff of the CDB as increased workload. However, much of the perceived difficulties in relation to these issues could be resolved by sharing of experience and responsibility, as efficient resource allocation and interagency trade-off of expertise exist in a number of Council areas. The urgent need to provide guidelines and embed learning is also highlighted by the different approaches and performance of TIGs.
- A number of TIGs appear to be dependent for vitality on one committed person or a small number of such persons, thus contributing to instability as there is considerable turnover of personnel in both community organisations and statutory agencies. In this respect, the convener/chairperson is key and methods of enhancing the knowledge/skills/status of the position (e.g. establishing a convener's forum which meets annually) should be explored.
- While participation of most of the relevant statutory organisations has been good, some agencies are unevenly represented across TIGs.

- The business sector, in general, is under-represented, making it difficult for TIGs to impact on employment.
- City/County boundaries do not coincide with areas of operation of statutory agencies, regional sections of government departments, and areas of influence of community groups/voluntary organizations, let alone Traveller populations. There is a clear need for adjoining CDB areas to cooperate in implementing strategies.
- The continued operation of TIGs in the face of difficult accommodation and law and order issues is a serious challenge in certain local authority areas. A major concern, highlighted by the withdrawal of the Traveller support group in one area, is the difficulty in sustaining TIG relationships in the face of such issues which fall outside the brief of the TIG. The TIG process is a collective approach to devising local policy, setting targets and delivering on them. It loses its core function when Travellers withdraw or when agencies stop engaging. TIGs need to put time and effort into ensuring that members are clear as to the nature of the remit of the TIG and its separate agenda.

While TIGs have had to meet serious challenges and differences in commitment to interagency work have been considerable, there is no doubting the progress that has been made, particularly in relation to Traveller involvement in decision-making. There are also several TIGs where the statutory and community sectors work collectively as a unit with notable progress in implementing strategies in some cases.

Developing Mutual Understanding

Given the history of discrimination against Travellers and the damaged relationships, in some cases, between Travellers and service providers, intercultural understanding is a basic requirement for TIG participation and many TIGs made strenuous efforts to establish understanding and develop common ground. Interagency training, very often in relation to diversity, was one of the first actions undertaken by several TIGs.

Diversity training for TIG members and frontline staff has been at the top of the agenda for Traveller representative and support groups around the country and has also been generally welcomed by statutory agencies. In a small number of instances it has been ill-considered and caused division but it has generally been productive, leading to a more incisive strategic approach based on a greater understanding of realities. It has been particularly effective in increasing frontline staff awareness of Traveller experience of discrimination.

Training has also been effective in tackling a problem which emerged in TIGs lacking previous contact with Travellers, where there was a reliance on received wisdom in relation to Traveller 'culture', with

too great an emphasis on difference and negativity, leading to a degree of helplessness in challenging established patterns of social exclusion. That reliance resulted, initially, in a number of project applications that could not be delivered as proposed, because they did not fit the needs of local Travellers. Such projects required intensive development intervention from Pobal. Received wisdom also contributed to a tendency to accept low standards. A common example of bad practice, commented on by TIG members from a number of local authority areas, was the collusion of the local education system with some Traveller parents to accept absenteeism in secondary schooling because of 'cultural rights', reducing opportunities for individual Traveller children. Rather than encouraging institutional and parental responsibility or searching out practical solutions around areas such as busing, homework space and accommodation of Traveller customs, low standards in relation to school retention, attendance and performance continued to be accepted, based on a notional understanding of Traveller culture.

Diversity training, where it was appropriately delivered, contributed to greater challenging of such attitudes but, more importantly, face to face discussion of such issues with 'real' Travellers on TIGs, along with the establishment and sharing of local baseline data, appears to have led to a much more pragmatic approach and a greater likelihood of achieving useful outcomes in many of those TIGs. One of the most positive findings of national Traveller organisations, from their review of TIGs, was the increased understanding which was developing, on all sides, because of Travellers interacting, face to face, with representatives of statutory agencies. Improved understanding also led, in the instance of schooling, to stronger demands from TIG members for the same standards to be applied to Traveller families and children by national agencies such as the National Education Welfare Board (NEWB), thereby providing Traveller children with the same opportunities as the rest of the community.

The overall effect of training and shared decision-making with Travellers has been a move towards planning, based on local evidence and a greater understanding of how culture actually informs and structures the social life of Travellers, as opposed to a decision-making process based on acceptance of common assumptions.

Focus of TIG Work

The overall purpose of TIGs is to improve Traveller access to services and to provide more integrated service delivery to achieve it.

A major focus of TIG operations has been on the related areas of education, training, youth development and employment. The linked actions, successes and failures of TIGs in relation to these areas reveal how progress in any one area is dependent on the others.

Many Travellers find it difficult to see a connection between formal education and employment, feeling discriminated against by employers and assuming that, even if they complete second level schooling, employers will not offer them jobs. Therefore, creating role models in employment who will give Travellers a reason to have more faith in formal education has been a priority area for all TIGs. Recently, the primary focus has shifted for many TIG members to extending educational gains, as, in the current economic climate, it is vital that Travellers are not left doubly disadvantaged when the recession ends by not only being unemployed but also having failed to make up the deficit in education, relative to the non-Traveller population. Many TIGs are currently concentrating on integrated initiatives in youth development and education support. This responds to the importance that TIGs have universally placed on increasing the number of Traveller youths attending and remaining at school throughout the second level cycle. The experience of the Fund suggests that youth development and the expansion of youth development projects have an important role to play in this. Promising youth development projects such as those undertaken in Cork and Kerry have demonstrated capacity to enhance the formal education sector. Recent DVDs of youth activities, produced by Cork County, funded by the Traveller Fund, and also by Cork City, demonstrate the effectiveness and vibrancy of youth development interventions. There is also a focus on initiatives aimed at changing Traveller attitudes towards education, such as countywide consultative meetings with parents and secondary school children, undertaken in Kildare.

Actions in the thematic areas referred to above usually take place as part of broader Traveller community development initiatives. A number of local authority areas have made substantial investment in developing women's networking groups and also, separately, in men's development, often through horse projects. TIGs, as they prepare to update City/County Traveller strategies, are now showing a far greater awareness of the inter-related nature of Traveller interventions.

Accommodation projects have been undertaken by only two TIGs, which is unsurprising, considering that they are working side-by-side with the statutory Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committees (LTACCS). However, TIGs, in general, show an appreciation in their strategies of the need to maintain a focus on accommodation and see the issue of accommodation support as part of their brief and as vital to sustaining all other actions.

Diversity training and training for representation was a feature of the initial work of many TIGs in the initial stages, as discussed previously, and continues to be seen as key to improving access to services.

Current State of TIG Development

The interagency process is a moving landscape with changing personnel and changing relationships affecting the performance of TIGs for better or worse and considerable movement in the stability of individual TIGs has taken place during their existence. In the early stages, one particular pilot TIG

appeared to be in a very good position to move forward. There was good statutory participation and a strong and active local Traveller representative presence. As a result of selectivity in dealings with the local Traveller representative group, a downward spiral commenced which resulted, ultimately, in collapse of the TIG. It is unlikely that any of the TIG members foresaw the difficulties which would arise. On the other hand, another TIG experienced a period of division which, initially, sapped its strength but the resolution of which ultimately contributed to a strong TIG which has taken effective action on a number of fronts. A significant amount of TIGs experienced downturns in their activity at periods during the first years but have recovered, often following reflection and re-setting of more practical goals. While not all TIGs are in good working order, in general, the capacity for TIGs to reinvent themselves shows local commitment to tackling persistent difficulties which affect Traveller service delivery. However, every effort should be made to ensure that TIGs overcome isolation and have access to advice where they are under threat. Many TIGs and Traveller organisations have complained about the lack of clear guidelines and, while it is doubtful if a standard set of procedures is applicable across local authorities, given different resources, experiences and Traveller populations, there is a need for dissemination of successful models. There is a planning checklist to help TIGs examine and adjust their procedures in the Section 7: Procedural Tools.

While many TIGs are on a sound footing, they are also under threat from a number of directions, including reduced personnel resources and isolation. Transfer of learning is crucial to enabling them to continue to grow.

Development of Traveller representation on TIGs, a key element in improving take-up of services, is one where an impact has been made. As the interagency process aims to deliver local solutions and meet Traveller needs through a collective process, there is little doubt that concentrating resources on increasing the capacity of the Traveller community in terms of representation, participation and increased negotiation skills could contribute significantly to the successful operation of TIGs. A review of progress by the national Traveller organisations in 2007 found that Traveller representation was present on many TIGs and that Traveller representatives appeared, in general, to be satisfied with the level of engagement of representatives of statutory agencies. It is also clear from Pobal development and from the experience of Traveller representatives that a productive rapport has often been established between Travellers and other members and is building a new framework for dealing with long-standing difficulties.

These very welcome positive outcomes suggest that the new process has the capacity to deliver for Travellers. However, there are local variations in relation to structural and organisational issues and in relation to representation. Pobal experience, along with internal consultations of the national Traveller organisations, suggest that some of the TIGs are not meeting regularly or are not operating effectively and that issues around representation are impeding progress of some TIGs.

While evidence from the operations of the Traveller Fund indicates that not all TIGs are functioning to their full potential the overall impression from Pobal development learning, national Traveller organisation reports and extensive contacts with personnel from statutory agencies, local authorities and the community/Traveller sector is that the experience has, so far, been positive and productive.

Positive Outcomes

Despite many challenges to the operations of TIGs, there are significant positive outcomes to date:

- Clare and South Dublin, the initial pilot groups, have now demonstrated over a five year period that the interagency process can work effectively.
- Face-to face communication and engagement in joint management of projects has increased trust and understanding and made it easier to resolve disputes.
- Local ownership of Traveller issues has led to a more pragmatic approach. There has been a growth of evidence-based decision-making using shared baseline data.
- Learning is becoming embedded across organisations locally.
- Coordinated responses to difficult issues are evident from TIG minutes in many counties.
- There is evidence of improved relationships between service providers and local Travellers in a number of local authority areas.
- Several Travellers have been moved into employment. Although many of those positions have been lost or are under threat, because of the recession, a number of Travellers now work in the public service. These role models are a crucial incentive to developing more positive Traveller attitudes to education.
- There is a new focus on legitimate Traveller enterprise.
- Engagement in a joint strategy across the country has led to more positive approach to Traveller issues by organisations and expectation of success is more evident, as TIGs encounter learning from other local authority areas.
- Considerable progress is evident in taking a multi-disciplinary approach towards dealing with problems, particularly in relation to education.
- Traveller representative capacity has increased substantially.

5. Key Factors in Success of TIGs

Senior Involvement and National Support

Monitoring of the interagency process has suggested that while enthusiasm is important, a solid foundation is more likely to depend on securing sustained commitment from senior personnel of participant organisations and on collaboratively devising a plan of action where responsibility is clearly allocated and shared between TIG members. A feature of many of the more successful TIGs is the presence of experienced Traveller representatives, along with good relationships between elements of the statutory sector and the local Traveller representative or support group, where one exists. A second feature is the presence and commitment of the Director of Community and Enterprise and the support of the County Manager.

A number of TIGs have suffered from the absence of senior agency personnel and, while they may include committed front-line personnel, have experienced difficulty in making any progress. Commitment at senior level in organisations has implications for those working directly with Travellers. Where senior managers are seen to prioritise Traveller issues, it encourages other senior managers to take a similar view. It also has a positive influence on how frontline staff view their role and how they perform. The attendance of a Chief Superintendent in County Cork at a number of TIG sub-committee meetings, in addition to acting as chairperson of the TIG, is motivational for all the organisations sitting on those groups. Likewise, having the County Manager as chairperson of South County Dublin TIG is inspirational across participating organisations.

The presence on TIGs of senior organisation representatives can add substantially to their potential in the following ways:

- It demonstrates the commitment of organisations.
- It enables decisions to be taken with the likelihood that agencies will commit their resources.
- Senior representation from any of the larger statutory organisations encourages a similar level of representation from other organisations.
- The presence of a senior chairman makes it much more likely that representatives will attend. For example, making a casual excuse to the Garda Chief Superintendent for non-attendance is considerably more intimidating than to an administrative officer.
- Leadership from a senior official can also add to a higher profile being given to services to the Traveller community by other local agencies.

Conversely, the lack of a visible presence of senior personnel from key agencies collaborating at national level is having a damaging effect on participation. Several TIG members have pointed out that, while they are expected to act and contribute to actions across the spectrum of thematic areas, there appears to be no framework for government departments and statutory agencies to initiate the system adjustments necessary to support local interagency involvement, enable the cross-funding of interagency actions, and provide mainstreaming mechanisms for promising interagency actions. Neither NTMAC nor the HLG are intended to, or have the capacity to, fulfil such a function, although, with recalibration of membership, the HLG could take on that role. It is vital that the group include relevant statutory agencies.

As well as stimulating and underpinning local interagency work, the establishment of such a group would counter mounting scepticism among TIG members about government interest in the process (with the exception of DJELR, which is seen as supportive). While re-directing existing funding streams to develop the focus on local interagency intervention would be an important part of its work, its primary function would be the initiation of systemic adaptation to enable more effective interagency work locally. Despite the greater emphasis on partnership approaches over the past two decades, interagency work is still seen by many in the statutory sector as supplementary. Work needs to be done to install interagency involvement as a core activity of the statutory sector.

In the absence of the Traveller Fund, which appears to have no prospect of continuation, some TIGs will inevitably cease to operate. Re-direction of existing funding, therefore, becomes critically important. It is worth recalling that a primary reason for taking a local interagency approach in the first place was that, despite very substantial spending on Traveller issues, outcomes were poor and it was recognised that a cross-sectoral approach was necessary. There is a strong case to be made for continuing a process based on a government-led change of direction that, although still in its infancy, appears to be bearing fruit.

The importance of national validation of TIG work, which would emanate from visible interagency collaboration at national level, should not be underestimated. One of the most important, if unanticipated, effects of Pobal development visits has been TIG perception of, and appreciation of, a 'national' interest in local activities.

Commitment

The positive results achieved by several TIGs have led to a growing perception by members that interagency cooperation works and that public structures can be flexible enough to impact on problems previously regarded as insoluble. The greatest achievement has been the trust built between Travellers and representatives of the statutory sector through shared management of local

actions. However there are substantial barriers and threats. Partnership and interagency work are now generally presented in policy documents as a normal part of public service delivery but this is not always reflected in attitudes within organisations. It should be acknowledged that there are numerous examples of solid commitment to the Traveller interagency process at different levels within organisations and, notably, examples of perseverance in the face of serious difficulty. However, commitment is not consistent.

On a national level, the lack of interagency collaboration in dealing with regional and local barriers to interagency work suggests that challenges to local interagency work have not been fully appreciated.

On a regional and local organisational level, lack of commitment to the interagency process is sometimes evident from failure of agencies to make participants available for meetings or failure to provide a dedicated representative. That interagency participation is not always regarded as an integral part of addressing diversity within service delivery, but as additional, is clear from funding applications to the Traveller Fund and the FÁS Special Initiative for Travellers, where the inclusion of time spent on interagency work is frequently included as match funding in kind, in other words, as an addition to normal work. This approach is in strong contrast to the regular attendance, acceptance of workload and provision of senior personnel which demonstrate the commitment of a number of local and regional arms of organisations and agencies.

On an individual level, a relatively small pool of people involved in working with Travellers has had a major impact on success, or otherwise, of TIGs. Where there is resistance to interagency work, it has manifested itself in failure to attend meetings or to contribute meaningfully to the interagency process, despite indications of organisational willingness to commit at regional or national level. In contrast, commitment from a small number of key individuals in both the statutory and community sectors has been responsible for sustaining vitality. In one of the smaller local authorities, one individual from the CDB was responsible for keeping the process alive over a period of two years with very little active support from key organisations and agencies, while the absence of any committed individual in another similarly-sized local authority area led to the process becoming moribund.

Incentives, sanctions and monitoring all have a part to play in broadening commitment, something that will be difficult to achieve without a concerted national approach.

Training for Interagency Work

Lack of training for interagency participation means that representatives are sometimes set up for failure. It is unfair to expect Traveller representatives who have no previous experience of committees or dealing with the statutory sector, to understand their role or carry it out effectively, without training. A lack of understanding of what representation entails can be a source of dissension on TIGs and effort needs to be invested in ensuring that there is a clear understanding of representatives' role and function.

The number of willing and capable representative Travellers is limited at present and they are subject to overload. Their workload needs to be collectively managed, with account taken of the different fora to which they contribute as members of the TIG and of other committees.

'Training' for interagency work can be formal or informal, with role modelling and advice from trusted partners often proving to be the more effective method of achieving progress.

Training to achieve optimum interagency participation is not solely a matter of ensuring that Traveller representatives have the capacity to represent their community; it also applies to development of interagency skills of other TIG members, whether through formal training or regular exchange of TIG experience.

The Importance of Open Communication and Equal Participation

Community and Traveller organisations entering the process had significant fears of statutory agencies imposing their will and also doubted that councils, which also control access to accommodation, would engage democratically and equitably in partnership with their clients. While most community organisations welcome interagency work, a small number of community organisations perceive that their efforts are diluted by participation in the interagency process. With statutory agencies taking a more active role in engaging with Travellers, Traveller support workers and coordinators have, more recently, been based in these agencies or shared with them. While this is a positive development in promoting collaboration and mainstreaming learning, it can raise fears in the community/voluntary sector of reduced input and control of resources, unless the statutory representatives on the TIG have cultivated a cooperative relationship. Full and equal participation in the design of City/County strategies is an important factor in avoiding such negative outcomes.

Deficiencies in learning transfer is compounded by the absence of a TIG chairperson/convenor network.

Traveller Participation and Representation

Traveller participation and representation are of such crucial importance to the effective functioning of TIGs that where there has been exclusion or failure to adequately to communicate effectively with Traveller representatives, it has been impossible to successfully progress effective interagency measures. The HLG Report emphasised that Traveller representation and participation is central to the local interagency approach. All the evidence from monitoring of TIG operations suggests that the assumption in the Report that “Travellers must be able to engage on an equal footing, if improvement is to occur” is correct.

Conclusion

The challenges facing TIGs are significant but it is important that problems are viewed in the light of positive outcomes of the Traveller interagency process, outlined at the end of section 4. Progress has been substantial but, if action is not taken in the key area of national management of TIGs, many of those gains will be lost and will result not only in the disintegration of TIGs but, in the eyes of the Traveller Community, yet another failed initiative, making a clear statement that, when the chips are down, they do not count.

6. Recommendations

A number of strategic actions are recommended in this section, based on the evidence gathered by the Traveller Fund. Recommendations on increasing effectiveness locally are included separately. It is worth recalling that the primary reason for taking a local interagency approach in the first place was that, despite very substantial spending on Traveller issues, outcomes were less than expected. The Traveller interagency process fits squarely within recent social and economic policy which places an emphasis on integrated service delivery. There is a strong case to be made for further developing a process, based on a government-led change of direction towards locally adapted provision, which, although very much in its infancy, appears to be productive. The state and statutory sector, the voluntary/community sector and Traveller groups have all invested considerable capital in the Traveller interagency process and failure to sustain it is likely to return stakeholders to an even worse position than before, as a result of disillusionment. Abandonment of the process or dissolution of TIGs through neglect is also likely to result in long-term damage to relationships with the Traveller Community, which has seen so many promising interventions fall short because of inadequate commitment or outright opposition.

National Recommendations

1. The importance of maintaining the Traveller Interagency Process despite cutbacks should be forcefully communicated by government to CDBs and Traveller Interagency Groups.
2. Interagency cooperation at national level should be strengthened. The relevant national statutory agencies and relevant government departments should be collaboratively involved in initiating system adjustments capable of supporting interagency involvement.
3. A Traveller interagency fund to incentivise the process, diverted from less successful initiatives within statutory agencies and government departments, should be provided. It would be a clear signal that the interagency approach is privileged by the state/statutory sector.
4. A network of Traveller Interagency Group convenors/chairpersons should be established. It would be an important step towards overcoming isolation and embedding learning.
5. Guidelines and examples of good practice should be issued to TIGs.
6. National Traveller organisations should get their pragmatic message out to local Traveller support groups that, despite discrimination, partnerships can work and progress can be made.
7. Expanded development support should be provided to Traveller Interagency Groups.

Local Recommendations

1. TIGs need to establish procedures which ensure full participation of members in decision-making. TIG operations should be reviewed using the planning template in the final section of this information pack.
2. Statutory agency involvement should be at both senior management and frontline level.
3. Responsibility and workload should be shared between organisations according to their capacity.
4. Where necessary, effort should be devoted to building Traveller representation.
5. Training needs of TIG members should be established. At a minimum, members should be made aware of the scope and limits of their representative role and should be supplied with sufficient information on methods of maximising the contribution of their organisations.
6. County Traveller Strategies should take a step by step approach, based on accurate baseline data, focusing on prioritised outcomes, achievable in the short and medium-term.
7. Regular networking of frontline staff should be facilitated.

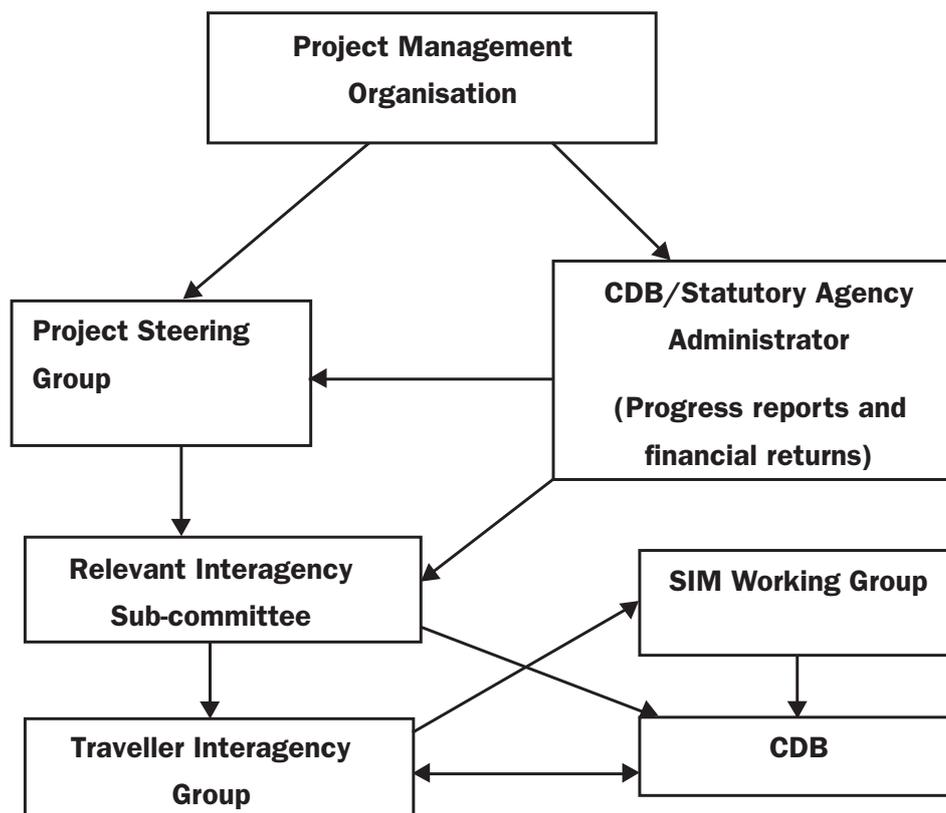
7. TIG Procedural Tools

At this stage, TIGs have evolved their own structures and procedures. However, interagency work is a complex area and a lot of trial and error has taken place. This final section is intended as a practical aid to implementing actions and conducting TIG business. It is comprised of

- A Commonly used TIG Communications Structure
- A Sub-committee Reporting Template
- A Traveller Interagency Group (TIG) Planning Checklist

Communications Structure

Figure 2: TIG Reporting Structure from project level upwards



Traveller Interagency Group (TIG) Planning Checklist

Composition of TIG

- Have you ensured that all agencies/organisations working with Travellers have been invited to participate?
- Is there broad Traveller representation? If not, have you devised a strategy to engage Traveller representatives?
- Are you satisfied with the spread of representatives?
- Are you satisfied with the level of seniority of representatives within their organisations?
- Where key players are missing, has it been discussed and has the TIG considered a strategy to engage with them?
- Have you considered the training needs of representatives to ensure full and equal participation and to ensure that representatives are fully aware of their role as a member of the TIG?

TIG Procedures

- Have you agreed how the chair will be appointed?
- Have you informed relevant agencies, government departments and local authority departments of the identity and contact details of the chair and of whoever is acting as information conduit?
- Have you agreed ground rules and discussed confidentiality?
- Is the language used at meetings (acronyms, planning terminology, etc.) comprehensible to all members?
- Have you established a simple reliable communications system between representatives / organisations?
- Are you keeping central administration to a minimum by allocating responsibility for leading actions and reporting across member organisations?
- Have you a system in place for setting meeting agendas and for distributing minutes?
- Have you set a date for review of procedures?

TIG Implementation

- Have you established baseline data? Which areas need further work?
- Have you listed current actions and examined them for duplication/synergy?
- Have you differentiated the local Traveller population in terms of need?
- Have you a strategy for setting common goals and getting commitment from organisations?
- Is your work based on and integrated into the County Traveller Strategy?
- Do sections of the strategy need review in the light of growing experience?
- Is responsibility for actions spread between organisations and suited to the capacity of the organisation?
- Have you prioritised actions that require interagency input and are achievable within a reasonable timeframe?
- Have you decided what sub-groups are required (whether thematic, geographic or other) and ensured that an effective reporting system operates between different levels of the TIG?
- Do you communicate with the LTACC and get a report back through one of your members?
- Are you communicating with neighbouring TIGs? Are there common issues best addressed on a regional basis?
- Are you communicating issues which affect your ability to carry out TIG work to DJELR and/or Pobal?
- Have you enabled regular information exchange between front-line staff?
- If you have any information gaps, have you approached the Traveller Interagency section of Pobal for advice or help?
- If you have updated your County Traveller Strategy, have you sent copies to DJELR and Pobal?

Designing Projects

- Have you adequately identified need?
- Are you certain of the willingness of the client population to participate?
- Have you set realistic outcomes for the proposed timeframe?
- Have you established indicators and put in place a response mechanism if the indicators are not met?

- Have you identified potential barriers and outlined a strategy for dealing with them?
- Is each member of the project steering group clear as to their role?
- How is project progress communicated to the TIG?
- Have you considered how sustainability and mainstreaming can be achieved?
- Have you, before embarking on a project, considered the effect on morale if it is not sustained beyond the pilot period?
- Have you considered possibilities for added value through integration with other current actions?

Sub-committee Reporting Template

Local Authority Area:					
THEME:		Reporting Date:		Chair:	Next: reporting Date:
Theme	Action	Person Responsible	Lead Organisation	Action Status	Next Step
					COMMENTS

Appendix 1: Projects Funded under the Traveller Interagency and Communications Fund

Round 1		
Local Authority	Field of Action	Amount
Sligo (HSE)	Monthly family health education from years 0-5	€84,186.00
Dublin City	Employment and enterprise	€166,970.00
Kerry	Education and youth development	€109,034.00
Clare	Education / family support	€127,060.00
Cork City	Youth development	€137,484.00
Carlow	Youth development worker, horse project feasibility study, education support	€104,647.00
Waterford County	Education / training and employment	€18,400.00
Wexford	Youth development, education and a women's network	€33,600.00
Galway County	After school education support, establishment of women's group	€38,639.00
Westmeath	Training and network building	€22,500.00
Offaly	Training / education support worker	€95,000.00
Limerick County	Co-ordinator for Traveller training	€95,000.00

Round 1 Extension		
Local Authority	Field of Action	Amount
Kerry	As above	€58,178.00
Sligo	As above	€59,330.00
Clare	As above	€53,340.00
Cork City	As above	€75,000.00
Wexford	As above	€27,750.00
Carlow	As above	€45,763.00

Round 2		
Local Authority	Field of Action	Amount
Limerick City	Feasibility study for horse project	€29,040.00
Clare	Traveller interagency working training & development programme	€49,500.00
Louth	Early childhood education: Toy box project	€58,211.56
Kildare	Feasibility study for resource centre	€11,350.00
Carlow	Traveller music research	€2,400.00
Cork City	Service improvement	€9,900.00
Wexford	Traveller organisation support	€31,960.00
Wicklow	Accommodation support	€52,500.00
Kilkenny	Horse project	€78,000.00
Meath	Employment and Traveller enterprise	€48,000.00
Cork County	Youth development	€73,271.00
Monaghan	Service improvement / Traveller organization support	€21,000.00
Cavan	Establish contacts with Travellers, hold a countywide listening exercise and publish findings / Interagency diversity training	€14,250.00
Sligo	Training /employment in health sector (partial Funding)	€43,617.44
Waterford City	Sugadj training support programme for teenagers	€77,000.00

Further project details as well as contact details for key personnel can be accessed by contacting the Traveller Fund Coordinator in Pobal.

Round 3 Strand 1: Interagency Strand		
Local Authority	Field of Action	Amount
Clare County Development Board	Shannon horse project	€19,425.00
South Dublin County Development Board	Active citizenship programme	€200,000.00
Kildare County Development Board	Programme to increase engagement of Traveller parents and students in mainstream post-primary education	€8,400.00
Cork County Development Board	Traveller youth project for west Cork	€167,544.00
Meath County Development Board	Traveller cultural heritage education initiative	€93,590.00
Cork City Development Board	Post-primary education support through support and mentoring	€110,400.00
Kilkenny County Development Board	Development of the capacity of the Kilkenny traveller community movement	€118,664.00
Monaghan County Development Board	Travelling Traveller information services project	€70,000.00
Galway County Development Board	Expansion of existing supports to the Traveller community in engaging with mainstream services and building self-help mechanisms	€103,138.00
Mayo County Development Board	Peer education project for Travellers	€28,000.00
South Tipperary County Development Board	South Tipperary Traveller men's development project	€116,700.00
Roscommon CDB	Traveller story literacy project delivered by adult Travellers	€18,283.00
Carlow County Development Board	Traveller men's development project	€138,929.00
Louth CDB	Development of a Traveller community strategy for Louth	€14,080.00
Limerick County Development Board	Employment of a Traveller community tenancy sustainment worker	€108,818.00

Round 3 Strand 2: Communication Strand		
Local Authority	Field of Action	Amount
Pavee Point Travellers Centre	Coordinate Traveller focus week	€49,648.00
Wicklow County Council	Publish and launch 'Suicide Among the Irish Traveller Community 2000 - 2006'	€10,000.00
Roscommon County Development Board	Alternative approaches to conflict resolution	€16,000.00
National Association of Traveller Centres	DVD promoting participation of Travellers in employment	€7,890.00
Galway County Council	Communication arts for Travellers	€10,000.00

Appendix 2: Projects with Potential

Despite limitations on funding as discussed in the body of the report, several effective and valuable actions have been undertaken by TIGs. Pobal commissioned two case studies on Round 1 projects and these are described below. The full study is available on the Pobal website.

Sligo

The Sligo Lifestart project funded under Round 1 of the Interagency Fund provides a service primarily in Sligo Town, but also to a number of other locations in the county. The Lifestart Sligo Traveller Family Visitor Service is operated under the auspices of Sligo Family Support Ltd. In County Sligo, the majority of Travellers live in or around two major urban centres, Sligo Town and Tubbercurry. There are a total of 104 Traveller families living in the County with 448 members, representing 1.8% of the total national population of Travellers.

The overall purpose of the Lifestart programme is to provide a family visitation service to families on a monthly basis to provide “information, support and guidance on early childhood development”. The services of the organisation have been available to the general population of Sligo since 1993. However, in 2004, there was a recognition of the need for a distinct Traveller family visitor service, acknowledging Travellers as a “distinctive ethnic minority with diverse needs”. This recognition was largely stimulated by the experience of one of the public health nurses and led to the development of the Family Visitor Service for Travellers Project. The principal role of the family visitor service is to provide a monthly home based visit, to deliver the “Your Growing Child” development programme. Materials used in the mainstream programme, delivered to the broader community, were re-designed with the help of Traveller primary healthcare trainees, to reflect the cultural identity of Travellers. The visitor also organises and facilitates a weekly Parent and Toddler group to include parenting programmes, first aid and positive parenting approaches. Short-term results are promising, despite a number of crisis incidents in the Traveller Community which caused a hiatus in the service to clients. However, an independent evaluation found that “the capacity to produce long-term impacts requires sustained engagement at least over the period of a full five year Lifestart cycle, something that cannot be guaranteed in the absence of mainstream funding support”, once again calling the provision of short-term funding into question.

Outcomes identified by the independent evaluator were that “parents were visibly utilising the information and advice provided, for example, in making educational toys, providing safe places for playtime and using child development play activities, producing change that is manifest during

developmental screenings carried out by the public health nurse. It is also suggested that the programme has encouraged self referral amongst involved parents in relation to child development and health issues and has helped to generate new confidence and capacity amongst Traveller parents.”

For service providers the project was found to provide useful learning. A HSE representative stated to the evaluator that:

“From a HSE perspective we have proved that if you do put extra resources into certain sectors and facilitate them better to avail of something, it happens, and I know the mainstreaming still has to come, but the biggest part of that has been achieved, the fact that Traveller families are getting a family visitor service that weren't getting before.”

The evaluator also identified partnership as an important factor in the success of the project, “ strong partnership working is another obvious strength of the project, particularly amongst those on its management structure, albeit that the range of organisations involved is limited.”

Kerry

The Tralee based Let’s Stay / Smartzone initiative was an ambitious project to integrate community-based and school-based efforts around improving Traveller education. It arose from concerns identified regarding the retention of students in secondary school, though there was also a concern to more adequately support transition from primary to secondary. Alongside this it was identified that a range of those working in schools, youth organisations and community groups were dealing with similar issues but usually did so in an isolated manner. To address these issues, the initiative focused on meeting two principal needs. Firstly, it sought to facilitate enhanced communication and co-operation between these different interests and provided an opportunity for them to meet through the creation of a network to enable members exchange information; to identify shared solutions in to ongoing problems and to support the development and operation of a project to provide after school support and youth development activities. The after school and youth development dimension of the project was known as the SMART (Study, Mentor, Arts, Recreation, Tuition) Zone project. This provided an integrated after school study support programme for Travellers, predominantly from the Mitchels area, located within the Kerry Diocesan Youth Service (KDYS) premises. It also provided a vehicle for the “development of strategic relationships with schools to support the effective participation of the group in school”. As well as the structured after school sessions extra support is also made available for those taking junior or leaving certificate exams years and for those who might experiencing other particular learning difficulties in school.

To support the transition from primary to secondary a specific programme known as “OK Let’s Go” was undertaken. This program, which operates on an integrated basis, is run in schools and at the KDYS centre and allows students to understand differences that will face them in secondary school.

The final issue being addressed by the project is the absence of activities targeted at younger Travellers in the Mitchels area of Tralee. To meet this need activities are organised in a series of four age and gender specific youth clubs involving outdoor education, health education/ fitness programmes, art activities, sports, group work and participation in regional and national events.

The Smartzone element of the project engaged with 45 young people. Of these, 36 attended on a regular basis with the remainder taking up opportunities in other programme in KDYS such as Transform Alley and the Applied Leaving Certificate or with FÁS. Two were irregular participants during this time. Alongside the provision of the after school programme a total of 52 pupils availed of the extra teaching hours provided by KES (Kerry VEC), producing, it is suggested, noticeable benefits for students.

According to the independent evaluator, a number of important outcomes are being achieved in the area of Traveller education in Tralee, and, in the view of many of the Let’s Stay Network members, the project has made particularly important contributions.

Reports from network members indicate that sustained progress on retention rates in secondary school has been made, although within this significant gender differences exist. In 2004, three Traveller students sat the Junior Certificate while none completed Leaving Certificate examinations. By 2008 this had doubled to six taking the Junior Certificate and three were sitting Leaving Certificate. Current indications are that 11 students will sit for the Junior Certificate in 2009 while five will do the Leaving Certificate. These steady increases in retention to both junior and senior level cycle meet the objectives of the National Traveller Education Strategy and suggest that the co-operation between Traveller young people, the KDYS, visiting teacher and Educational Welfare Officer services; agencies such as RAPID and participating schools is proving to be highly effective.

Crucially though, access to employment remains a significant challenge for this project and beyond. If employment impacts cannot be made there is a danger that progress towards increased Junior and Leaving Certificate participation will be inhibited.

The evaluator attributed success to the establishment of an effective network of strategic actors drawn from schools, state agencies youth and community organisations.