



Traveller Visibility
Group Cork

**FIVE-YEAR
STRATEGIC PLAN**
2024 – 2029



Traveller Visibility Group



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The Context for Our Strategic Plan

The Traveller Visibility Group Cork is a Cork-based, Traveller-led community development organisation started in the early 1990s. TVG was established to address three specific issues: discrimination against Travellers within the social welfare system, disadvantage and segregation experienced by Traveller children and their parents in the educational system, and the lack of accommodation for Travellers. While these remain key issues that TVG continues to address, TVG now also addresses a range of other issues, including drug and alcohol addiction and childcare. All these issues need to be understood within the context of the ongoing and day-to-day racism and microaggressions experienced by Travellers. The main focus of TVG remains challenging all forms of anti-Traveller racism.

This strategic plan has been developed since the Covid Pandemic caused widespread loss and disruption within the local Traveller community. The plan has been written in a period of recovery and reflection. During the pandemic TVG and the Traveller community received essential help from mainstream services, however service responses to the pandemic provided further evidence of how Travellers remain excluded, disadvantaged, and pushed to the margins of Irish society. The resilience of the Traveller Community was clearly demonstrated when Traveller families and communities came together to support each other during this period of crisis and adversity.

In the national context, the recognition of Travellers as a distinct ethnic group within Irish society in 2017 is still celebrated and there have been a number of potentially positive reports since Traveller ethnicity has been recognised (e.g. Traveller Homelessness, A Hidden Crisis, 2022; Traveller Accommodation Expert Review 2019; and the National Traveller Health Action Plan 2022-27). All these reports have made clear recommendations on changes required in existing policies and state practices, both at a local and national level. However, these reports have resulted in very little movement at both the national and local level in addressing anti-Traveller racism and improving the everyday lives of Travellers in Cork.

It is in this context that this strategic plan has been developed. While TVG has strong allies in the settled community and there have been some positive developments in government policy making, the resources required to meet the basic human rights of Travellers in accommodation, housing, education, health and social welfare have not been provided. Ireland remains a country where anti-Traveller racism is rampant and where anti-Traveller racist comments go largely unchallenged. In the face of this hostile context, TVG uses community development approaches to draw on the strengths of the Traveller Community to develop innovative programmes and practices to improve the lives of Travellers.

Our Achievements

Health

TVG presented on health to the Joint Committee on Key Issues affecting the Traveller Community at the Oireachtas.

Created a wrap around front-line service to the Traveller community in the prevention and protection of the Coronavirus in Cork such as testing, vaccination and prevention methods.

Supported Health Service Executive to identify and reach isolated Travellers across the city and into the county of Cork during Covid 19 pandemic.

Developed and circulated numerous information videos and distributed leaflets on care of safety during Covid 19 including mental health and well-being

Completed internationally-acclaimed research on the Traveller Microbiome with University College Cork and Science Foundation Ireland linking Traveller nomadic/traditional lifestyle in the improved outcome of chronic gut-related disorders.

Maintained a robust health promotion and signposting support to the community through all lock downs and during office closures extending to weekend and evening work where necessary.



Completed a local action plan with the Traveller Health Unit in relation to the National Traveller Health Action Plan.

TVG has become an active member of the National Traveller Mental Health Network and has taken part in 3 national campaigns to demand government intervention to the mental health crisis in the community.

TVG successfully launched a local Traveller counselling service with Coisceim which saw over 10 psychotherapists undergo Traveller Culture and Awareness Training to promote the development of culturally aware mental health services.



Our Achievements

Education and Employment



The National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy's Supporting Traveller and Roma pilot project programme has continued throughout Covid and into 2024 successfully receiving 3 extensions of funding since 2020.

24 Traveller women completed the University College Cork Leadership in the Community diploma course with STHN and local Traveller Orgs Advocacy advice.

TVG received funding to create a Traveller Men's Health Internship programme which has seen one young Traveller man benefited from 3 years paid work experience, completed a 2 year diploma course in youth and Community along with Traveller Mediation training and many other training courses. TVG has received support in 2024 from both the Community Foundation Ireland and the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth from this position that allows this post to continue for a further three years.

TVG has advocated at the Traveller Interagency Group for the development of Traveller specific apprenticeships and career pathways in public service roles which has resulted in 2 successful training courses completed during 2022-2023 with more work planned for 2024-2025.



TVG has successfully increased its participation in Community Employment schemes to improve Travellers access to further training and work experience.



Our Achievements

Children, Young People and Childcare

TVG Creche and Preschool has completed a successful expansion which has ensured financial stability and sustainability for this crucial service.

TVG Creche and Preschool now welcome a majority of Traveller children into its service which is significant because nationally there is a lack of Traveller children attending childcare services particularly the Early Childhood Care and Education Scheme programme.

Completed a funded research project on the impact of racism on the mental health of young Travellers called "Keeping Young Travellers Well". This project proved successful and TVG will continue working with the relevant agencies and organisations on developing this work further into 2024.



Our Achievements

Accommodation



TVG along with Cork Traveller Women's Network and Spring Lane residents successfully brought a complaint of 14 children and their families to the office of the Children's Ombudsman (OCO) which resulted in a series of recommendations from the OCO to our Local Authority to resolve the poor conditions and overcrowding on site with immediate effect.

TVG effectively lobbied for the adoption of the most recent TAP and continued to advocate for its delivery throughout 2019-2024

TVG presented to the Joint Committee for Issues Impacting Travellers at the Oireachtas on Accommodation

Delivered 2 national events on Traveller accommodation including Hidden Homelessness

Delivered 5 national submission on policies impacting Traveller accommodation.



Our Achievements

Traveller Culture

TVG delivered 3 successful Traveller Pride events including 2 online and socially distant festivals during Covid 19

Traveller Pride has grown to include a large family day event in Fitzgerald's Park each year which includes performance by young Travellers and opportunities for the settled community and Travellers to meet and discuss Traveller identity and culture.

We completed a mural project with Cork Community Art Link promoting Traveller culture and heritage on the external walls of our building which has now been included in local walking tours (e.g. <https://www.feministwalkcork.ie/the-walk>).

We created a local Traveller Ally Awards ceremony with Cork Traveller Women's Network which celebrated and promoted Traveller allies with aim of growing more public support for Traveller rights in Cork and nationally.

TVG hosted a number of Traveller culture nights alongside the City's Culture night each September and included schools and other public institutions in the celebration and programme of activities.

The Traveller Pride flag flies over both University College Cork and Cork City Council each year- even during the Covid years.



Our Achievements



Traveller Visibility Group

TVG as an organisation

TVG and CTWN was awarded a special recognition at the Pride of Place awards for our work as a Community Development Project during Covid 19

TVG has successfully completed Charities Regulator Compliance requirements

The restructuring of the Project Coordinator role to two Co-Directors has been successfully implemented

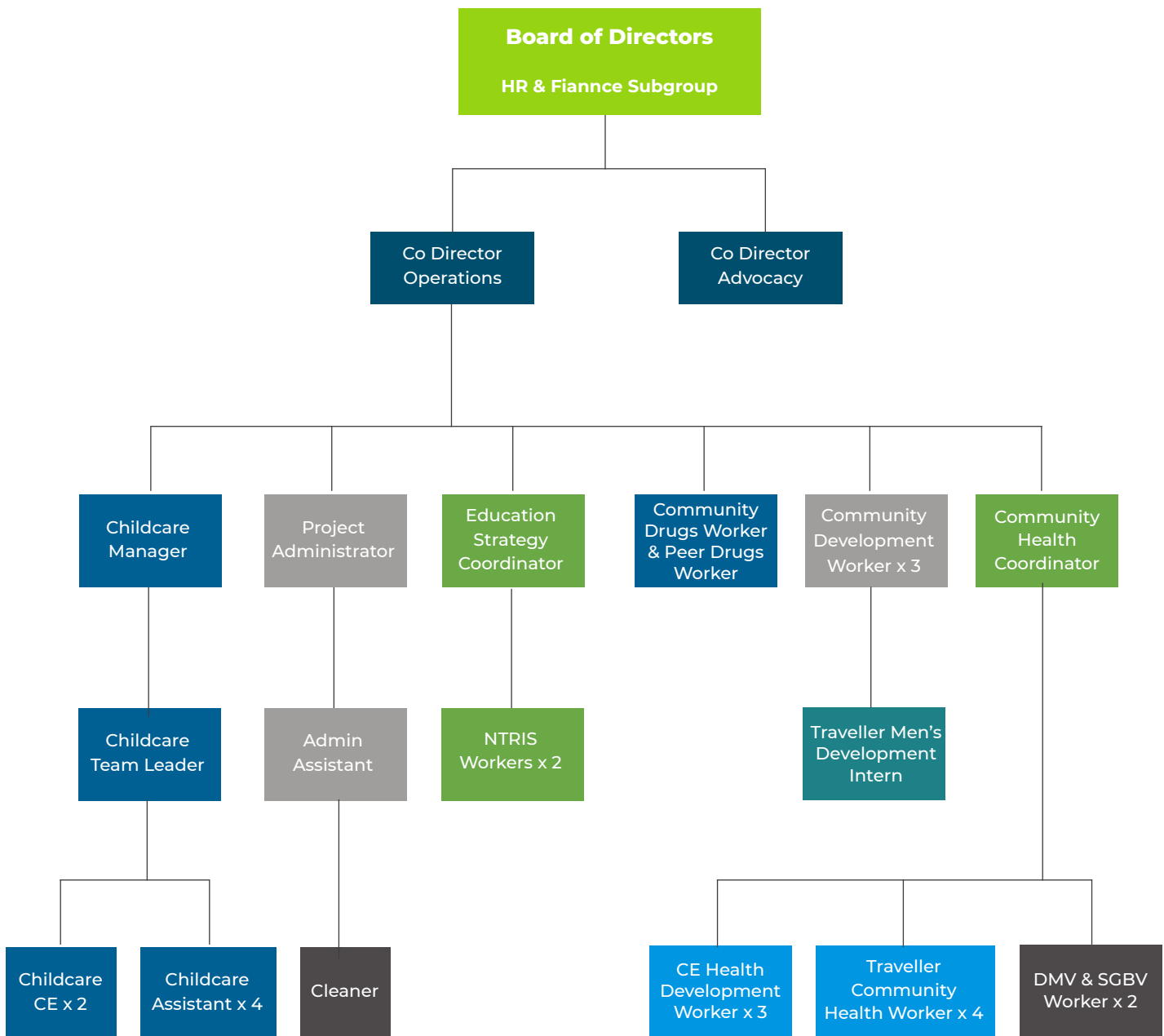
TVG has developed new positions and training opportunities to see an increase in Traveller employees in TVG including a Traveller Peer Drugs Worker, 2 Traveller Domestic Violence Workers and ensuring Traveller leaderships throughout the project project.

TVG Board successfully increased the number of Traveller Directors at TVG and continue to recruit new Board members to ensure a dynamic and robust Board that is both Traveller-led and responds to the needs of the organisation.

TVG continues to work in solidarity and collaboration with our sister-organisations across Cork city and county and maintains a strong working relationship with national and regional organisations and key stakeholders across the country.



TVG as an organisation





Our Mission

We are an independent, Cork-based, Traveller-led community development organisation. We pursue social justice and equality for Travellers so that we can live free from racism and discrimination.

Principles underpinning the work of TVG:

- We are an open and welcoming space for all Travellers and promote Traveller visibility across Cork.
- We continually promote Traveller participation and Traveller leadership.
- We work from a human rights and anti racist perspective that is Traveller-led
- We promote Traveller ethnicity, identities and cultures.
- We are committed to collective action with the Traveller community and to work in solidarity with wider society to create a better Ireland.

Our Values



Traveller-led

We are a Traveller-led organisation. 'Nothing about us without us'. The best decisions made by TVG are made through consultation with and leadership from the Traveller community.



Anti-Racist

We oppose racism in all its forms and actively promote racial equality, Traveller ethnicity, identities and cultures.



Based on Human Rights

Traveller rights are human rights, and these continue to be denied to members of the Traveller community. We continue to fight for the rights of Travellers.



Inclusive and Diverse

The Traveller community is diverse. We welcome the diversity within the Traveller community and the opportunity this provides TVG to be an inclusive organisation.



Culture and Identity

We celebrate the cultures of the Traveller Community and the strength of Traveller identities.



Community Development

Community Development is the core approach to the work of TVG. We work in partnership with Traveller organisations as well as with individuals and organisations within settled communities to create a more socially just society.



Promoting Sustainability

We recognise that climate change will have a dramatic impact on the lives of Travellers. We are committed to developing sustainable policies and practices.

Strategic Goals 2024-2029



Accommodation

to support Travellers in accessing a variety of culturally appropriate accommodation.



Health

to support the improvement of Travellers' health, including increasing their life expectancy.



Education and Employment

to advocate for an education and training system in Ireland that is inclusive of Travellers and provides Travellers with opportunities to improve their life and work opportunities.



Children, Young People and Childcare

to empower children and young people who provide the future for the Traveller community. To advocate for them to have every opportunity to develop and succeed in their lives. TVG Goras Creche and preschool will continue to provide a quality, multicultural and inclusive early years service to Traveller and non-Traveller families.



Traveller Culture

to promote Traveller cultures being celebrated and valued within wider Irish society by broadening our networks and collaborating with the various stakeholders in the arts sector throughout Cork and beyond.



TVG as an Organisation

to ensure that TVG continues to develop as a Traveller-led community development organisation that successfully fights for the rights of the Traveller community at a local and national levels.



Sustainability

TVG will continue to strive for best practice in creating a sustainable working environment for our team and community members.

Our Priority Actions 2024-2029

Accommodation

1. Continue to lobby for Travellers' accommodation locally and nationally.
2. Support successful delivery of Ombudsman recommendations response to Spring Lane complaint.
3. Advocate for a national independent Traveller Accommodation Agency.

Health

4. Deliver health information to the Traveller community in Cork including preventative options and improving access to services.
5. Oversee delivery of the regional Traveller Health Action Plan.
6. Work with mental health and addiction services to improve well-being and health outcomes.

Education and Employment

7. Launch the Traveller Education Strategic Plan with Cork Traveller Education Working Group (CTEWG)
8. Deliver the National Traveller and Roma Inclusion (NTRIS) Supporting Traveller and Roma (STAR) Education Pilot and develop a national conference on Traveller Education.
9. Continue to explore career pathways and professional training opportunities for Travellers

Children, Young People and Childcare

10. Develop a Traveller youth worker position and source new funding for this crucial position.
11. To develop ways of young people's engagement with TVG.
12. To continue to develop a highly successful creche and support progress in developing early years provisions.

Traveller Culture

13. Develop a programme of activities that celebrate Traveller cultures, including for Traveller Pride, Traveller Ally Awards and Traveller Ethnicity Day.
14. Increase TVG's participation in 'mainstream' cultural activities, e.g Culture Night and Cruinniú na nÓg and St Patrick's Festival.
15. Work with other groups towards the development of a Traveller Festival in Cork.

TVG as an Organisation

16. To promote Traveller leadership and decision making
17. Team Development and support, continue to source opportunity for salary increase and training investment.
18. To promote high standards in governance in line with TVG's charitable status and to ensure that resources are used effectively and efficiently.

Sustainability

19. To promote sustainable policies and practices in all areas of TVG's work and with the Traveller community.
20. Engage with other NGOs to examine how climate change will impact on the Traveller community.







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