



EXCHANGE HOUSE
Travellers Service

Exchange House
Youth Service

INFORMATION PACK

CONTENTS

Youth Service Insight	.....	4
Youth Service History	.....	7
Traveller Facts	.....	10
Legislation History	.....	11
Discrimination	.....	14
Accommodation Issues	.....	15
FAQs	.....	16
Further Information	.....	18
Notes	.....	19

YOUTH SERVICE INSIGHT

Organisation

In 1987, with from the Department of Education and Science (Youth Affairs Section) and the Department of the Environment and Local Government “The Dublin Committee for Travelling People- Youth Affairs” was established. Based in Dublin’s Inner City the project aimed to ensure that as many young Travellers as possible were able to utilise youth facilities.

Following the dissolution of the Dublin Committee for Travelling People the project changed its name to Travellers Youth Service (TYS) in 1996. TYS is primarily funded by the Department of Education & Science (Youth Affairs Section) and is evaluated by The City of Dublin Youth Service Board.

Client Group and Catchment Area

Through social and personal education the Youth Service aims to ensure that as many young Travellers are able to participate in youth activities, and by so doing, enhance their personal and community development skills, enabling them to take greater control of their own lives.

The 6-25 age group, both male and female, is the primary target age group. In addition some work is done with the over 25’s.

The catchment area for the youth service is the greater Dublin area. At present work is centred in the following areas: St Oliver’s Park/ Bridgeview (Clondalkin), Labre Park/ Kylemore Grove (Ballyfermot), St Margaret’s Park/Carton areas (Ballymun), Bluebell and the Inner City.

TYS currently works with in excess of 250 young people in its catchment area.

Local and National Context

The need for Traveller specific services and Traveller participation in the delivery of these services has been highlighted in the Government Task Force Report (1995). The Youth Service recognises the need to align its service development with the local and national policies of the Health, Social and Youth Services at these levels.

The organisation sees itself as a complementary part of existing services to the Travelling People. Other agencies do other types of work. We would see no useful purpose in duplicating services that are being provided or could and should be provided by other groups.

As a result we feel that cooperation between the various agencies and mutual support in the work each agency does would lead to a more effective and efficient service and a better quality of life for the Travelling People.

It is our policy to support groups that are working for the improvement of conditions for the Travelling People. We will assist these groups in whatever way possible, providing that such support and assistance does not lead to a reduction in the services we are providing, and providing that the group looking for our assistance does not operate a policy that would be contrary to that held by Exchange House Youth Service.

We are committed to providing services in a manner that ensures maximum possible co-ordination and liaison with the City of Dublin Youth Service Board and other state and voluntary service providers.

Service Objectives and Present Commitments

To provide through various different types of programmes an extensive youth service to young Travellers and to support and encourage them in accessing mainstream youth services were available.

Present Commitments

Outreach Youth Work

Outreach Youth Work is the core programme used to provide youth services to the majority of the young Travellers in our catchment area. This service includes a collection service to a youth facility, outings, sporting activities, camping trips, adventure sports, swimming, participation in personal and community development courses.

Street Begging

In close consultation with the H.S.E Exchange House provides a targeted service to work with vulnerable young Traveller children and those families involved in street begging.

General Youth Service

As many young Travellers as possible should have access to youth activities. Youth facilities can be specifically for Travellers, or run by settled people for both Travellers and settled youth. Where such services are available the Youth Service will make use of these to further develop its services.

Backup Support Service

In many areas there may be no youth facilities especially for Travellers. The young people may wish to make use of the settled facilities. Exchange House Youth Service promotes and encourages this by providing a backup support to the young people and mainstream youth organisations.

Special Projects

These activities include Irish Traveller Movement event days, away trips, community development courses, outdoor pursuits, co-operation with other youth organisations, health and drugs awareness programmes.

Geographical provision of Youth Services

Exchange House Youth Service is committed to extending its facilities and programmes so that as many young Travellers as possible can participate in positive youth activities.

Educational Away Programmes

Aim to develop a positive relationship with our young people and through doing this the

young people are selected due to concerns about interacting with the wider community and liaising with the relative agencies. Consist of year round outdoor activities, team building and personal development programmes. By delivering these the Youth Service has achieved and will continue to achieve a strong working relationship .And the potential to provide positive role models for the young people.

Outdoor Pursuits Programme

The Youth Service is currently working on the compilation of a policy for the future development of an extensive Outdoor Pursuits Programme for the Travelling Community. This will encompass leadership, personal development and skill building and will use the many forms of Outdoor Pursuits. This programme will also be one of our modular development programmes.

Prevention Programmes

The Youth Service shall develop a Policy around the Health Promotion and Prevention programmes such as drugs and alcohol and implement these on an ongoing formal and informal basis. These courses shall be designed in consultation with the young people, and co-operation with the relevant agencies and the design of each will be pertinent to each location.

High Risk Programme

The development of a special programme with a high therapeutic content for targeted youth that are involved in destructive, illegal and anti-social behaviour. This would involve engaging these young people in challenging and rewarding activities that would ultimately increase their self esteem and reduce the occurrence of harmful behaviour.

Funding

The Youth Service is funded by the Department of Education & Science (Youth Affairs Section). Additional funding for programmes comes from sources such as; The City of Dublin Youth Service Board, Dublin Bus, The Advance Project and Dublin City Council amongst others.

After-Schools Programme

The youth service operates two after-schools programmes for 8-12 year olds in Labre Park. And 6-13 year olds St. Oliver's Park. We provide a comprehensive programme of educational assistance to the young people and work to improve relationships between the young, their families and schools

The Youth Service is affiliated to the following; the City of Dublin Youth Service Board, the Irish Traveller Movement Youth Section and the National Youth Council of Ireland.

YOUTH SERVICE HISTORY

1965 A committee was set up called the Dublin Itinerant Settlement Committee (D.I.S.C) this was an umbrella group for various local committees working with Travellers in the Greater Dublin area

1967 The appointment of the first Social worker to work with Travellers in Ireland takes place

1968 Dublin's first Traveller site opened in Labre Park, Ballyfermot for 40 families. This consisted of 40 prefab tigeens– which in fact were nothing more than rooms, (with a toilet & sink with running water, in a separate part) along with electricity and a solid fuel burning stove

The nuns in Milltown ran a school, a mini bus provided by the committee brought the children to it

Seventeen trailers were supplied to needy families throughout Dublin, and three trailers to Travellers in other parts of the country

1970 A second Social Worker was employed by the committee. Six trailers were supplied to needy families. The Committee supplied a new minibus to the Milltown school

1971 Dublin City Council build a 60' x 30' Community Centre beside Labre Park. First Youth Worker employed to work with Travellers in Ireland (Victor Foley) is employed by the Committee

1973 D.I.S.C changes its name to Dublin Committee for Travelling People (D.C.T.P). An Alcoholic Adviser employed by the committee. A Second Youth Worker is employed for Avila Park. A third Social Worker is employed. The D.C.T.P once again stresses the need for transient halting sites

1974 Two more Youth Workers employed– one of whom resigned after the special school (St Kieran's in Bray) is destroyed by fire as that was her base. She was not replaced. The other worker was for Cara Park, Coolock Collinstown House, Clondalkin is used as a temporary emergency residential care centre for a short period of time. Three more staff are employed. The D.C.T.P. has always acknowledged the need for proper accommodation for Travellers, and as such has campaigned from its very start for such accommodation. The 1975 annual report clearly sums this up by saying “our overall plan is to provide proper living accommodation for all the families, either in standard housing or on serviced sites and halts for transient families

- 1976 An accommodation unit in Newtown-Mount-Kennedy is established as a Residential home for Travelling children. This is the first D.C.T.P. Project to take off which will have its own Management Committee
- 1977 The Department of Health requests the committee open 2 day care centres
- 1978 The second D.C.T.P. project takes off with the opening of St Columba's School in Strand Street
- 1979 The second Day Care centre opens in Townsend Street– this closed in 1981
- 1980 The third D.C.T.P. Project– Exchange House Emergency Night Shelter opens. Labre Park Youth centre closed as it is taken over by Dublin City Council
- 1981 The Committee gives financial aid to a group taking a case in Strasbourg on Travellers rights
- 1982 Labre Park centre re-opens - run by the Committee. It closes for good in 1986. Project One extended its brief by opening a residential home for girls in Roundwood, Co. Wicklow
- 1987 For the first time a Constitution is passed by the D.C.T.P. committee. The fourth D.C.T.P. project - The D.C.T.P. Youth Affairs is established
- 1988 The AGM saw a new Chairperson, Secretary and Treasurer elected. However the election was declared invalid. The previous Chairperson was reinstated with absolute powers and the constitution was suspended. To all intents and purposes this finished the D.C.T.P. as a co-ordinating group in the Dublin area
- 1996 The four projects founded by the D.C.T.P. still exist and have continued to evolve in order to meet the changing needs of the people with whom we are working. Each project has its own Management Committee which is entirely responsible for the working of the project. These are regular meetings at project directors level and there is a very strong common philosophy on how we do the work

- 1997** TYS employed a Community Worker to work with Travellers in Ballyfermot. Victor Foley retires after 25 years as Project Director. TYS amalgamates with Exchange House– Travellers Support Service under the umbrella of Exchange House. Conor Hickey, Director of Exchange House becomes Director of TYS. A new position of Senior Project Worker is created. There are now 4 youth workers
Exchange House Travellers Service launches its own web site.
- 1998** TYS becomes affiliated to the National Youth Council of Ireland . TYS plays host to European Youth Workers for a Study Visit under the framework of Youth for Europe. A fifth Youth Worker is employed. TYS moves premises to Exchange House
- 1999** In May, Victor Bewley, one of the founding members of the Dublin Committee for Travelling People dies. In July, the Youth Service launched SummerFest'99 a novel new approach to Summer Activities, which runs for eight weeks
- 2000** Seven Youth Workers are now employed and work commences in Dun Laoghaire - Rathdown
Helen Campbell becomes Director of Exchange House
- 2001** Exchange House launches a new web site and domain at www.exchangehouse.ie The Youth Service staff is expanded to ten with a new after schools programme in Labre Park
An Taoiseach, Mr. Bertie Ahern TD officially opens our new premises at 42 James Street
- 2002** TYS participates in the Education Show at the RDS, a second after schools programme commences in St. Oliver's Park
- 2003** Our Youth Service staff now numbers sixteen working with young Travellers all over the city
- 2004** After an outside evaluation of the Youth Service was carried out it was to decide to work with young people over the age of ten only. The evaluation proved very valuable to the team and they were now in a position to refocus their programmes

- 2005 The Youth Service goes from strength to strength and continues to provide a high quality Youth Service in our catchment areas
- 2006 Exchange House moves to Great Strand Street. The Youth Service is able to expand more due to better facilities
- 2007 Heydi Foster appointed the new Director of Exchange House
The President Mary McAleese officially opens our new premises in 61 Great Strand Street
- 2008 The Stay in Schools Initiative is expanded after its success in Ballymun
- 2009 Our Youth Service staff now numbers 13 with the majority of these Travellers
Three of our young people get involved in Comhairle na nÓg

TRAVELLER FACTS

Travellers in the Republic of Ireland

- The Traveller population in Ireland according to the CSO in 2006 is 22,369. Although according to The National Traveller Health Study they suggest that there is 35,000. As there is no specific break down of this figure for the purpose of this fact sheet we will work of the census of 2006
- Of this 22,369, 41% or 9,271 are aged between 0-14(64% of whom are aged 5-14) 56% or 12,507 are aged between 15 and 64, and 3% are aged over 65. (CSO)
- 62% OR 13,861 OF ALL Travellers are aged under 25 (CSO)
- The figure of 22,369 represented 0.53% of the overall population (CSO)
- Travellers tend to marry at a young age, of the age 15-24 age group, 21% of males and 26% of females were married. (CSO)
- 62% are aged less than 25 years compared with 35.3% nationally
- 41.5% are aged less than 15 years compared to 21.4% nationally

Travellers in Northern Ireland

- According to the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency in 2001 there were 1710 Travellers in Northern Ireland
- Travellers have a high level of ill health, infant mortality rates are very high and death rates of children up to 10 years of age, are up to 10 times higher than that of the settled community. (Dept. of Environment Northern Ireland)
- An absence of hot and cold water, no means of safe disposal of raw sewerage or refuse, between 80% and 96% unemployment rates. (N.I. Advisory Committee on Travellers)

References:

Central Statistics Office Ireland
Department of Education and Science
Department of the Environment(Northern Ireland)
The Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency

LEGISLATION HISTORY

- 1963** **Commission on Itinerancy**
Recommended assimilation of Travellers into the settled community
- 1983** **Report of the Travelling People Review Body**
Promoted the integration of Travellers into mainstream society without adequately supporting and promoting their cultural identity
- 1988** **Housing Act**
Provides the first statutory recognition of Traveller specific accommodation
- 1991** **Prohibition of Incitement to Hatred Act**
Prohibits incitement to hatred on the ground of race, colour, religion, ethnic or national origin, membership of the Traveller community and sexual orientation
- 1992** **Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act**
Section 10 of this act empowers local authorities to remove Travellers, who are camped unofficially, to an unofficial site anywhere within a five mile radius of where they are
- 1993** **Roads Act**
Relevant to Traveller accommodation but makes very little direct mention to the special needs of the Traveller Community. The Act empowers Local Authorities and Gardaí to remove temporary dwellings in certain circumstances
- 1995** **White Paper on Education: ‘Charting our Education Future’**
Call for full participation in school life by Traveller Children by means of integration while at the same time respecting Traveller culture
- 1995** **Casual Trading Act**
This Act requires market traders to apply to each local authority for a casual license for any market in their area
- 1995** **Report of the Task Force on the Travelling Community**
This makes a lot of recommendations covering all aspects of Traveller life and acknowledges the distinct culture and identity of the Traveller community

- 1997** **Control of Horses Act**
Places restriction on the ownership of horses
- 1998** **Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act**
Obliges local authorities to meet the current and projected needs of the Traveller Community. Sections of the Act gives increased powers of eviction to Local Authorities
- 1999** **Employment Equality Act**
This Act outlaws discrimination in the employment field on several grounds including membership of the Traveller community
- 1999** **Equality Authority Established**
The body established with responsibility for the implementation of the Employment Equality Act and the forth coming Equal Status Legislation
- 2000** **Equal Status Legislation**
This covers the discrimination in the provision of services
- 2001** **Youth Work Act**
The first regulation of Youth Work in the history of the state
- 2002** **The Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act**
This Act criminalizes trespass on public and private land. Section 24 of the Public Order Act as amended by the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act, 2002, provides that:
- This law was introduced at a time when over a 1,000 Traveller families were camped on public land due to the lack of provision of Traveller accommodation, and where they had been no real progress in relation to the provision of transient accommodation. Its introduction put vulnerable families in fear of being moved on by the Gardaí and put an end to families being able to practice their rights to be nomadic.*

DISCRIMINATION

Travellers are widely acknowledged as one of the most marginalised and disadvantaged groups in Irish society. Travellers fare poorly on every indicator used to measure disadvantage: unemployment, poverty, social exclusion, health status infant mortality, life expectancy, illiteracy, education and training levels, access to decision making and political representation, gender equality, access to credit, accommodation and living conditions.

It is not surprising therefore that the Economic and Social Research Institute concluded: ***“the circumstances of the Irish Travelling people are intolerable. No humane or decent society. Once made aware of such circumstances could permit for them to persist (ESRI July 1986 paper no.131)***

Travellers also experience discrimination when services and policies are designed and implemented without regard to their potential negative impact on Travellers. This can be defined as institutional racism. ***“Irish Travellers are uniquely disadvantaged group: impoverished, under educated, often despised and ostracised, they live on the margins of Irish society.” (ESRI July’ 1986 paper no.131)***

Over the past 15 years Traveller organisations, Travellers and others have mobilised as advocates for Traveller rights. This has resulted in legislative change and has been supported by developments at International level. In 1991, the European Parliament Committee of Inquiry on Racism and Xenophobia reported that in Ireland ***“The single most discriminated against ethnic group is the Travelling People”***. The committee referring to Ireland recommended ***“ that the only member state which has not already signed the UN Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Racial Discrimination, do so as soon as possible”***.

For the Traveller Community, this forced exclusion from Irish society is something over which they have no control or choice and comes within the definitions of discrimination or on occasion racism.

Statistics are available to reflect these levels of discrimination. For example 59% would not welcome a Traveller as a next door neighbour and 48% would not consider a Traveller competent to serve on a jury. (*Michael MacGreil, Prejudice in Ireland Revisited.*)

Media coverage of incidents involving individual members of the Traveller Community often portrays Travellers as a homogenous group. This serves to fuel negative attitudes towards them. Anti Traveller stories eventually lead to the ostracising of a whole ethnic group and results in discrimination. Travellers cannot be blamed for the actions of a small minority. Just as whole sections of the settled community cannot be blamed for actions of individuals.

Increased contact between the Traveller community and settled community is supported and encouraged as this helps eliminate some of the mistrust and suspicion that exists between the communities.

ACCOMMODATION ISSUES

There are approximately 25,000 Travellers in Ireland: this constitutes less than 1% of the total population. In view of this, providing well-serviced accommodation for all Traveller families is not an unrealistic aim.

However, in 2004, 601 families were living in un-authorised sites. 549 were sharing accommodation in overcrowded conditions and 328 families were living in temporary accommodation.

Un-serviced sites lack the following basic requirements: regular refuse collection, running water, toilets, bath and showers, access to electricity and fire precautions.

Living in these conditions greatly reduces the life expectancy of the Traveller community, Travellers can now expect a life expectancy comparable to that of the settled community in the 1950's.

Traveller families live in conditions that no other section of Irish society would be expected to tolerate. Studies have shown that there is a critical link between improved accommodation for Travellers and better uptake of education, health and employment services.

The Traveller community face opposition to the provision of accommodation from sections of the settled community. However, better serviced accommodation is an important factor in alleviating the serious hostility and discrimination shown to Travellers by many in the settled community.

Where Travellers are accommodated in proper serviced halting sites or group housing schemes, opposition to Travellers living in the area greatly diminishes or evaporates. Also where halting sites are well serviced they have little or no negative impact on the residential property market.

In 1995, the report of the Task Force on the Travelling Community recommended that 3,100 units of Traveller specific accommodation be provided by the year 2000. By the end of 2004 only 98 units of this accommodation have been provided.

The number of Traveller families awaiting permanent accommodation at the end of 2004 was in excess of 3,500. The additional number of Traveller families accommodated in 2004 was 231. This rate of accommodation provision will not even keep pace with the projected 6% annual increase in Traveller population.

Traveller specific accommodation includes, serviced halting sites, group housing schemes and transient sites. The Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act 1998 places a statutory obligation on Local Authorities to meet the accommodation needs of Travellers. They are required to implement an accommodation programme that would include this range of accommodation provision as well as standard local authority housing for Travellers for whom this is their preferred option.

FAQs

Q *Where do Travellers come from?*

A Travellers are native to Ireland, they have been part of Irish society for centuries. Traveller History, in large has gone unrecorded

Q *How many Travellers live in Ireland today?*

A According to the last National Census, there are estimated to be in excess of 24,000 in the Republic. But according to the National Traveller Health Study there is 35,000

Q *Do Travellers speak a separate language?*

A Yes. Travellers do have their own language which is sometimes called “cant”, “gammon” or “shelta”. There are some regional dialects of this language around the country

Q *Do Travellers face racism and discrimination?*

A Yes. Racism in Ireland towards minorities is a problem. Racism is evident at many levels, from marches or attack on Travellers’ sites, to lack of adequate provision for the nomadic lifestyle of the Travellers in the education system. The media reinforces negative stereotypes and do very little to show the good work which Travellers are doing

Q *What kind of occupations do Travellers have?*

A Traveller occupations in the past included tinsmithing, farm labour, door to door sales and recycling. Many Travellers today are employed in a variety of activities from market trading and scrap collecting to antiques dealing. Quite a few Travellers are employed in community groups, youth groups, voluntary organisations, and training centres to help better the situation for Travellers in Ireland

Q *Are there any similarities between Travellers and other Nomadic groups such as Gypsies and Roma?*

A Yes, they are somewhat alike in that they share a nomadic lifestyle and culture. This brings with it a long history of persecution and rejection. Gypsies and Roma are both from different origins in different countries

This page contains some frequently asked questions about our organisation and the Travelling Community. If you have a question, why not email us at info@exchangehouse.ie and we'll try and give you an answer.

Q *Who or what is Exchange House?*

A We are a group of Travellers and settled people working together to provide social, support, youth and money advice service to the Travelling Community in the greater Dublin area of Ireland

Q *How long has Social Services been provided for Travellers?*

A The first ever Social Worker to work with the Travelling Community was employed in 1967, this person was employed by the Dublin Committee for Travelling People (DCTP) (the organisation that Exchange House Travellers Service and Travellers' Youth Service were born out of)

Q *How long have Youth Services been provided for Travellers?*

A The first ever Youth Worker to work with Travellers was Victor Foley who worked with the DCTP and Travellers' Youth Service from 1971 to 1997

Q *Where is the oldest Traveller site in Dublin?*

A Labre Park, Ballyfermot is the oldest Traveller site in Dublin, it was opened in 1968 and a Youth Service operated there ever since

Q *Who are Travellers?*

A Travellers (spelt with a capital "T") are a nomadic ethnic minority in Ireland. Irish Travellers have a separate culture and identity to the settled community in Ireland, however they are all Irish

FURTHER INFORMATION

For further information on Exchange House Youth Service or
any other services within Exchange House
or
to go on the mailing list to receive our newsletter

NEWS TRAVELS

please go to our website

www.exchangehouse.ie

Or email

info@exchangehouse.ie

NOTES



EXCHANGE HOUSE
Travellers Service

Exchange House Travellers Service
61 Great Strand Street
Dublin 1
Ireland

tel: +353 (0)1 872 1094

fax: +353 (0)1 872 1118

web: www.exchangehouse.ie

email: info@exchangehouse.ie