



**Belfast Health and
Social Care Trust**

Traveller Health and Wellbeing

Action Plan

January 2010

Introduction

Travellers have been living in Ireland for centuries. It is difficult to accurately assess how many Travellers are currently living in Northern Ireland and in Belfast. The 2001 Census identified around 1 700 Travellers in Northern Ireland, with the biggest concentration in Belfast. Following recent research carried out in Northern Ireland by Traveller support group, An Munia Tober, as part of the All Ireland Traveller Health study, An Munia Tober statistics indicate there are approximately 2,500 Travellers in Northern Ireland with approximately 950 of these in Belfast. The figure for Belfast includes those Travellers living in the Twinbrook and Poleglass area, and also includes Travellers living on sites, in group housing and in settled accommodation. The All Ireland Traveller Health study, which is due for publication in the summer, will provide a further breakdown of figures, including clarification of the Traveller population for the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust area. Travellers are one of the most disadvantaged groups in society and experience severe health inequalities (RVH report). The Promoting Social Inclusion Report on Travellers (DHSSPS, 99) described the Traveller community as “the most disadvantaged and socially excluded group in Northern Ireland”. The community of Irish Travellers in Northern Ireland and in Belfast continue to experience significantly lower levels of health than those in the settled community. There are a number of core determinants, to which the low health status of the Traveller community can be attributed and which include: racism, poor accommodation, unemployment and access to health and social care. There is much discussion but minimal empirical evidence on Traveller Community Health in Belfast and in Northern Ireland in general. The main research on Travellers health in Northern Ireland (Ginnity '93, McMahon '05), refers to the Barry Report conducted in the Republic of Ireland in 1987. This report concluded that on average, Traveller women’s mortality is 10 years less than their peers in the non-

Traveller (settled community) and is 12 years less for Traveller men. The report also concluded that Traveller women are three times more likely to suffer a miscarriage.

These factors, combined with the low levels of literacy among Travellers and the view expressed by some Travellers during the BHSC Traveller workshop (13.11.09) of factors which impact on Travellers accessing health and social care, such as negative and discriminatory attitudes of some staff towards Travellers, demonstrate the need for positive action to address the health and social care needs of the Traveller community.

Previous Traveller Health Initiatives with Health and Social Care

Over recent years the Primary Health Care of Travellers has been provided mainly by the North & West Belfast Traveller team, which included the provision of a Social Worker, Health Visitor and a Community Psychiatric Nurse. Following the PSI Report, The North and West Belfast Health Action Zone established the Travellers Action Group, aimed at developing a multi agency approach to addressing the health and social inequalities experienced by the Traveller community.

In 2004, The Royal Hospitals established a three Year Traveller Health Outreach Project, which included training Traveller women to become Lay Health Mentors. It also involved the completion of a survey on 'Perceptions of Health and Health Services by the Traveller Community in the Greater Belfast Area'.

An evaluation carried out on the Royal Hospitals Traveller Health project stated:

“Capacity building and empowerment:

Whilst the LHM participants may not be able to play the role of full mentors, the skills of the individuals have been developed and there is a need to continue to utilise these in the future. Travellers are willing to influence the development of health services but statutory bodies need to do more to facilitate this. There is potential for further roles for Travellers, for example as advocates. “

Recommendations from the evaluation included;

- Seeking to mainstream many of the Traveller health initiatives currently being delivered so that they do not have to rely on piecemeal funding.
- Ensuring that health is not addressed in isolation but linked to education and employment opportunities for Travellers.
- The need for funders to co-ordinate their resources to avoid duplication in service delivery.
- Greater co-ordination of services to Travellers across Trust boundaries.
- Ensuring that there is Traveller involvement in the planning and delivery of future work and effective user involvement mechanisms established.
- Better utilisation of the participants from the LHM training, possibly in the role of health advocates.
- Ensuring that all future work links into other Traveller support initiatives, such as the All Ireland Health Study.

The Lay Health Workers who were trained as part of this project are now part of the health project facilitated by An Múna Tober.

The evaluation also produced an action plan. This action plan was adopted by the BHSCT Trust Board in 2007. Much of the work in the action plan has been carried out. The completion of the remaining elements of the plan are very much linked to the Trust developing a Traveller Health Strategy which could incorporate the development of Traveller Peer Support Workers.

An Munia Tober Community Health Programme

An Munia Tober is a local voluntary organisation providing support for the Travelling Community in Northern Ireland. For a number of years now, An Munia Tober has facilitated a Traveller Health Programme. The Community Health programme at An Munia Tober consists of one Health Coordinator who designs and delivers the health programme in consultation with the Traveller community, specifically Traveller women. Activities within the health programme include courses designed to raise awareness of health issues that affect the Traveller community. Courses delivered include the Cook It programme, First Aid, Safety in the home, Stress Management and Yoga. Other activities involved visits to the Royal Hospitals, the Health Committee at Stormont, Action Cancer and the Chest Heart and Stroke Association. The health programme for Traveller men has concentrated on engaging with Traveller men through social activities including football, paint balling, dog racing as well as talks on alcohol and drug abuse.

Current BHSCT involvement with the Traveller Community

The Trust currently employs a Health Visitor and a Social Worker to work specifically with the Traveller community. As well as fulfilling a generic health visiting and social work function, both members of staff have an extended role within the Traveller community and are involved a wide range of work, including:

- Working closely with voluntary agencies such as Surestart to plan and deliver Traveller focused initiatives such as a drop-in centre
- Working to address a wide range of issues that impact on Travellers such as accommodation, education, general health, employment , racism and inter-traveller relationships, as well as the relationships between the traveller and settled communities
- Advocate and challenge, advise and offer support on behalf of the Travellers
- Mediation in crisis situations, often at the request of other agencies, for example, the PSNI
- Working with Barnardos Preschool Education Project for Traveller children to contribute to health reviews on children attending and support activities for Traveller Health Focus week.
- Providing support for the all Ireland Traveller Health Study, including gathering data
- Participation on the An Munia Tober Health Steering Group, including practical support for the planning and delivery of health days during Traveller Focus week and the delivery of presentations on Traveller Health
- Providing links to other health professionals working with travellers, both regionally and throughout Ireland
- Reporting back to Public Health Agency on vaccination uptake rate and promotion of vaccinations throughout the Traveller Community.
- Representation on the regional Traveller sub-group for education and the Belfast City Council led Tension Monitoring Committee
- Advice and support to Trust staff from different disciplines who are engaging with the Travellers
- Contribute to the induction of newly qualified social workers and students

Development of a Traveller Health Strategy for Belfast Health and Social Care Trust – the process

In May 2008 Belfast Health and Social Care Trust produced “Involving You – A framework for community development and user engagement”. This Framework outlines the Trusts approach to community, services user, patient and carer involvement in the planning, design and delivery of services. Members of the Traveller community were involved in the consultation to inform the development of this Framework and one of the action points identified within the document is to:

“develop an overall service plan with the Travelling community, focused on improving health, participation and reducing health inequalities”

A Traveller Steering Group met within the Trust in May 2009 to discuss the best way forward in addressing this action. This group had representation from all corporate and services groups and An Munia Tober, and was chaired by the Director of Social Services, Family and Child Care.

At this meeting it was agreed that the Trust would facilitate a workshop with a range of Trust staff, representatives from An Munia Tober, individuals from the Traveller community and other relevant stakeholders (see appendix 1). The aim of this workshop was to identify key actions for the Trust to develop to support improvements in the health and wellbeing of the Traveller community.

The workshop was held in November 2009 and included a range of presentations, as well as smaller group discussions to identify key priorities for action (see appendix 2). The following themes were identified from the workshop discussions:

- ❖ Information
- ❖ Training
- ❖ Health Improvement
- ❖ Employability
- ❖ Co-ordination

At the workshop there was a consensus amongst the attendees that there would be great benefit in developing a Peer Support Worker pilot project for the Traveller Community. The employment of a Traveller within the Trust could promote, encourage and support the uptake of health and social care services, which historically have been poorly accessed by the Travelling community. It could also promote better partnership working between health service providers and the Travelling Community, with a genuine partnership facilitating enhanced health and well-being.

Traveller Health Strategy – action plan

Co-ordination

Objective	Actions	Lead by	Timescales	Outcomes
To facilitate quarterly meetings of the BHSCT Traveller Health Strategy Board to over see the implementation of the Traveller Health Strategy	Arrange meetings of the Trust Traveller Strategy Board	PPI Lead	Quarterly	Group established
To convene a Traveller Health Strategy Operational support group to facilitate the operationalisation of the Traveller Health Strategy	Seek representation to this group from Service Groups Arrange 4-6 weekly meetings To develop a work plan to take forward the actions detailed in the Traveller Health Strategy	PPI Lead	4-6 weekly	Group established Operational action plan produced
To establish current level of service provision within the Traveller Community to help facilitate better co-ordination	To carryout a mapping exercise to establish service provision from the Statutory, voluntary and community sectors	Operational Support Group		Better Co-ordination of service provision Less duplication of service
To engage with OFMDFM / Public Health Agency to ensure the initiation of a multi-agency group to address	Arrange a meeting with appropriate representatives to agree next steps	Director Family and Child Care		Multi-agency group established

the needs of the Traveller community				
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Information

Objective	Actions	Lead by	Timescales	Outcomes
To increase access to Trust Services and facilities through the provision of clear and appropriate information	Assess the information needs of the Traveller community Identify the most appropriate formats for use in the dissemination of information Explore the most appropriate ways to disseminate information Monitor uptake of services by members of the Traveller community	Operational Support Group		Increased availability of appropriate information Increase uptake of services amongst the Traveller community

Training

Objective	Actions	Lead by	Timescales	Outcomes
To increase cultural awareness and understanding	Continue to develop and deliver Traveller cultural awareness training for Trust staff Develop and deliver appropriate communication skills training for relevant frontline staff dealing with individuals from the Traveller	Social Inequalities Dept / Community Development Dept		Improved access to Trust services and reduced experience of discrimination by Travellers accessing services

<p>To increase awareness and promote better understanding of the health needs of Travellers amongst Trust staff</p> <p>To ensure that all organisations with Service Level Agreements to deliver service on behalf of the Trust participate in Traveller cultural awareness training</p> <p>To develop appropriate training for people from the Traveller community to support the development of increased awareness of Trust services and how to access them</p>	<p>community</p> <p>Develop and deliver training about the health needs of Travellers</p> <p>Ensure that a requirement for attendance at cultural awareness training is included in Service Level Agreements</p> <p>Assess training needs and develop training in partnership with Traveller lay health workers</p>	<p>Social Inequalities Dept</p> <p>Social Inequalities Dept / Contracts Manager</p> <p>Operational Support Group</p>		
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Health Improvement

Objective	Actions	Lead by	Timescales	Outcomes
<p>To support the development of closer working relationships between the health improvement dept and the Traveller community</p> <p>To increase access to a range of health promotion activities and programmes within the Traveller</p>	<p>Identify a named Health Improvement member of staff to ensure ongoing engagement with the Health Improvement Dept</p> <p>To explore opportunities for the delivery of Health Improvement programmes including Cook it,</p>	<p>Health Improvement Dept</p> <p>Health Improvement Dept</p>		<p>Increased uptake of programmes and improved lifestyles (eg diet and exercise)</p>

<p>community</p> <p>To ensure dissemination and understanding of a range of relevant and appropriate health improvement information throughout the Traveller community</p> <p>To develop a range of initiatives to support improvements in mental health and emotional wellbeing</p>	<p>Health for Life, Good Food Toolkit and other relevant programmes.</p> <p>Assess health improvement information needs Work with Health Improvement staff to ensure availability and dissemination of appropriate information</p> <p>Establish links with the Trusts Mental Health Promotion Specialist Explore possible mental health promotion projects</p>	<p>(in liaison with An Munia Tober)</p> <p>Health Improvement Dept</p> <p>Operational support group / Mental Health Promotion Specialist</p>		<p>Improved mental health and wellbeing amongst the Traveller Community</p>
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Employability

Objective	Actions	Lead by	Timescales	Outcomes
<p>To develop opportunities for job shadowing and mentorship within the Trust</p> <p>To promote opportunities for volunteering within the Trust and offer appropriate support for Traveller to avail of these opportunities</p>	<p>Work with Human Resource Dept to explore appropriate models for work shadowing and mentorship</p> <p>To work with the Volunteer Services Team to explore and promote opportunities for volunteering within the Trust</p>	<p>PPI lead / HR</p> <p>Volunteer Services Manager</p>		<p>Participation in employability project Increased employment of Travellers by the Trust</p> <p>Increased number of Travellers as volunteers</p>

Appendix 1

Attendees at the Traveller Workshop

Caroline	Bloomfield	BHSCT
Leslie	Boydell	BHSCT
Margaret	Boyle	Derry Traveller Community support Group
Deirdre	Brady	Craigavon Traveller Support Project
Margaret	Braniff	An Munia Tober
Patricia	Campbell	BHSCT
Ruth	Clarke	BHSCT
Missie	Collins	Pavee Point
Caroline	Colman	Southern Trust
Ann Marie	Connors	Traveller Community
Catherine	Connors	Traveller Community
Yvonne	Cowan	BHSCT
Brenda	Creaney	BHSCT
Iain	Deboys	HSCB
Carol	Diffin	BHSCT
Catherine	Doherty	BHSCT
Ned	Doherty	Traveller Community
Jacqueline	Donahue	An Munia Tober
Mark	Donahue	An Munia Tober
Frances	Donnelly	BHSCT
Ronnie	Fay	Pavee Point
Barbara	Fitzgerald	
John	Growcott	BHSCT

Rosemary	Hall	
Derek	Hanway	An Munia Tober
Isabel	Holmes	
Paul	Jago	BHSCT
Catherine	Livingstone	HEP
Brigid	Loughran	An Munia Tober
Peter	McBrien	BHSCT
Brigid	McCann	Traveller Community
Sandra	McCarry	BHSCT
Brigid	McDonagh	Traveller Community
Mary	McDonnell	NIHE - Traveller Communitys Unit
Veronica	McEaney	BHSCT
Ita	McErlean	ROSPA
Donna	McGeary	BHSCT
John	McGeown	BHSCT
William	McKee	BHSCT
Grainne	McMacken	BHSCT
Mary	McMahon	Public Health Agency
Bernie	McNally	BHSCT
Karen	Meehan	CAWT
Maurice	Meehan	Investing for Health
Mary Ellen	Mongan	Traveller Community
Paddy	Mongan	An Munia Tober
Nora	Murray	BHSCT
Bryan	Nelson	BHSCT
Karen	O'Sullivan	BHSCT
Anita	Pannell	An Munia Tober
Joan	Peden	BHSCT
Barbara	Purcell	Traveller Community
Owen	Purcell	Traveller Community

Andrea	Redmond	Western Area Traveller Inclusion Project
Jacque	Ritchie	An Munia Tober
Anne	Robinson	BHSCT
Sally	Rock	Belfast City Council
Ida	Ross	BHSCT
Kathleen	Sheridan	Traveller Community
Martin	Sloane	BHSCT
Connor	Smith	NIHE - Traveller Communitys Unit
Denise	Stockman	BHSCT
Una	Tohill	An Munia Tober
Jill	Turner	University College Dublin
Lesley	Walker	BHSCT
Kevin	Webb	BHSCT
Dolores	Wilson	An Munia Tober
Jennifer	Yu	BHSCT

Appendix 2

Traveller Workshop Friday, 13th November 2009

- 9.30** Registration/ Tea & Coffee
- 10.00** Welcome & Introduction Dr Leslie Boydell, Belfast Health and Social Care Trust
- 10.05** Open Remarks, William McKee Chief Executive, Belfast Health and Social Care Trust
- 10.10** Presentation of All Ireland Traveller Health Study
Heather Robinson, Head of Equality & Human Rights, DHSSPS
- 10.20** Presentation of models on primary health, South Ireland, Brigid Quirke, Asst Director, All Ireland Study
- 10.40** Review of Primary Health Projects in Dublin/East
Regions
Missie Collins, Dublin/East Regions Health Primary Care Project
- 11.00** Tea & Coffee Break
- 11.10** Belfast Traveller Project
- Introduction of the presentation & the process
Brigid Loughran, Training Consultant
 - Story telling by the Traveller Community
 - Travellers Presentation
Catherine Connor
 - Experience and Challenges
Anne Robinson & Martin Sloane, BHSCT
- 11.40** Workshop

12.40 Workshop Feedback, Derek Hanway, Director An
Munia Tober & Brigid Loughran

12.50 Closing Remarks
Bernie McNally, Director of Social Services Family and Childcare & Mental Health and Disability, BHSCT

13.00 Light Lunch will be provided