



National Traveller Mental Health Network

Opening Statement of presentation to the Joint Committee on key issues affecting Travellers

The National Traveller Mental Health Network was established due to the current crisis in Traveller mental health. The Network is Traveller led and a collective of Travellers from across the country who are all acutely aware of and living with the mental health difficulties within their community. .The Network and its strategic plan was launched in March 2019. (Please find copy of the Strategic Plan attached).

The National Traveller Mental Health Network key recommendation is the need for the implementation of a National Traveller Mental Health Strategy as recommended by the Joint Committee of the Future of Mental Health Care. Which would have ring fenced funding in order to address the significant deterioration in mental health. The strategy should also include the implementation of an ethnic identifier and cultural competency training for all staff.

The Traveller community in Ireland is currently experiencing a mental health crisis. Which can be seen through the unprecedented high rates of suicide and self-harm, with large amounts of Travellers on medication for anxiety and depression, with a lack of follow on supports or referrals. Traveller face discrimination on a daily basis in all areas of their life which is highlighted in the high levels of unemployment, low levels of educational attainment and the poor living conditions experienced by the majority of Travellers all of which affects their mental health. In addition, the high rates of Travellers in prison accounting for 10 percent of the overall prison population and 15 percent for women. The parallels between the levels of Mental health difficulties experienced by Travellers and the numbers in prison was recognised by this committee.