

Opening Statement

As a professional comment my first suggestion is that the issue of Traveller unemployment can be addressed and resolved with the right strategic approach. Additionally, I professionally believe if we address the area of unemployment then other challenging issues such as education, accommodation, health, racism etc. will resolve themselves more easily over time.

We need be under no illusion in addressing the issue of Traveller unemployment there needs to be targeted state investment in strategic programmes and projects. These programmes and projects need to go the “extra mile” to achieve the desired outcome and needs to be led by a Traveller organisation. With that said the investment will be a cost neutral investment as progress is made in reducing the 80% unemployment figure.

Current levels of Traveller community participation in the labour market.

Sinead De Burca in the St Stephens Green Trust presentation will focus on this section.

I would suggest that we take serious note of the fact that 20% of Travellers eligible for the labour market are employed against all odds. They are employed in roles such as Landscape Gardeners, Labourers, Childcare Assistants, Carers, , Security Personnel, and working within the Hospitality and Retail sectors; other professions include Teachers, GPs, Barrister, Army and Garda members as well as those working within the Community Development sector to name a few.

We now need to strategically focus on the remaining 80% or 8541 unemployed (CSO 2016). Putting this figure in context, that’s a little over 50% of the lower half of the Hogan stand in Croke Park. Added to that Ireland is at full employment and holding recruitment fairs abroad and yet we have 80% of the Traveller community whom are isolated and most distant from the labour market.

Internationally most countries struggle with their delivery of services and realising equality for their ethnic minorities. This results in significant challenges in the day to day lives for these people. We have an advantage in that we are an innovative nation with quality services especially in Community Development, Education and Training.

Factors that affect participation in the labour market by the Traveller community, including but not limited to, perceived stigma associated with being a Traveller and the discrimination of Travellers among the general population.

Kathleen Sherlock and the Minceir Whidden Submission will focus on this section.

I will add an anonymous case study.

“Two Traveller men in their mid-20s applied to a local pharma company for employment. They both had qualifications from the local 3rd level institute to get them to interview. They submitted their CVs and letter of application with support from their 3rd level tutor, they received no further communication from the company for the next 4 weeks.

Their tutor advised that they re-apply using their Irish names and the home address of the tutor and a colleague. Both were interviewed and subsequently employed.

After 6 months when the probationary period was over the Tutor made contact with the head of recruitment in the Company and discussed what had happened. The head of HR acknowledged that when originally the CVs were submitted he did not review them when he saw the names and address. He also acknowledged that both men were excellent employees and today are still employed by the company”

This a day to day reality for the Traveller community.

Lower educational levels and other socio-economic conditions.

Pa Reilly and the Pavee Point submission will focus on this section.

We need to be cognisant that a large cohort of the Traveller community require additional educational supports at all levels and up skilling from Solas. With that said it needs to be integrated quality programmes that have job prospects. This can be achieved strategically when Solas and the ETB have targets / Quotas that ensure that members of the Traveller community are integrated in all their programmes, especially in adult and continuing education and training. However this will only occur with outreach projects to the local Traveller community and follow up supports with Travellers that are participating in all programmes.

Current breakdown of Traveller groupings.

- Leaving Cert & 3rd Level Qualification
- Males & Females (18-40 years) Unqualified/Unskilled
- Males & Females (most distant from labour market)
- Travellers engaged in Enterprise and the Traveller economy
- Males & Females (14-18 years) NEETS,
- Ex-Offenders
- Currently Employed (20%)

Access to employment services and the adequacy of funding for these services.

In recent years there has been well funded initiatives to support unemployed people to return to work primarily via Seetac, Turas nua & SICAP and previously the Local Employment Services (LES).

In general these have had very limited success with the Traveller community. Anecdotally our information would suggest that most employment liaison people didn't believe Travellers would be employed. Additionally it should be taken into account that mainstream services have failed the Traveller community, therefore as a community they do not have great faith in such services and engagement can be sporadic.

In general employment service do not do outreach work with any communities, they are centre based, the initial approach of any employment and enterprise agency with the Traveller community needs to begin with where Travellers are at, "In their communities and liaising with their local Traveller community development group".

Currently "Involve" are engaged in a number of Pilot employment projects in Ballina, Longford and Tullamore. We are also researching different work and approaches over the last 20 years to address long term unemployment. Added to that we have visited the UK and looked at initiatives in London and Manchester. We will compile a report and more detailed recommendations on our findings from this work in early 2020

Barriers to labour market participation by the Traveller community.

- **Basic barriers and challenges** to gaining employment identified by Traveller & Roma young people
- Little or no work experience (employers were looking for experienced worker)
- Low levels of education/skills
- Employers would not give them a chance
- Low Pay for young people
- Don't know what they want to work at
- Don't like having a boss
- Wanted it to be practical and not so much paperwork

Barriers identified in the recent report "What next for Traveller Employment"

- Inadequate Public Services – Childcare, Secondary Benefits
- Discrimination – High levels of systemic discrimination and prejudice in work places and by employers who would not consider giving a Traveller a job.
- Education not viewed as the best route to income generation - some felt education may not lead to employment due to discrimination. A lack of knowledge regarding welfare to work was also identified as barrier
- Programmatic Issues – does not take Traveller Culture into account; national initiatives too rigid and large and respond to the individual nature of Traveller engagement which requires individualised responses.

Employment initiatives to support the Traveller community both at local and national levels.

This section will be addressed by shuttle knit

Shuttle knit

Recommendations

- The employment subgroup of NTRIS is supported with a small fund to deliver on its work and representation from Trade Unions and Employers is achieved.
- All government departments and public bodies identified in the NTRIS employment actions actively engage and deliver on their remit.
- With regard to the civil and public services we need "champions" and "Positive affirmative actions" as similar to the disabilities champion in the Public Appointments Service (PAS)

- There is a requirement for an internships / traineeships / apprenticeships model of recruitment via PAS for all government departments with set targets for Traveller recruitment and supports in the early stages of employment.
- There are many individual examples of positive affirmative actions which should be replicated. There were “champions” at senior level in all cases. E.g. Joe Horan, South Dublin council. Tusla’s initiatives to support Travellers who study social work should be replicated.
- There is a targeted fund established and tendered with the clear outcome of reducing unemployment initially to 50% over 6 years. Increase from 2112 to 5326 with Pilots initially established as outlined in the proposal below which was submitted to dormant accounts funding
- Quotas are put in place for Traveller employment with government departments, public bodies and agencies / NGOs funded by the state.