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An Coiste um Shaincheisteanna Ríthábhachtacha a théann i gcion ar an Lucht Siúil

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um Shaincheisteanna Ríthábhachtacha
a théann i gcion ar an Lucht Siúil

Samhain 2021

Joint Committee on Key Issues Affecting the Traveller Community

Final Report of the Joint Committee on
Key Issues Affecting the Traveller Community

The Committee was struck by the resilience of the Traveller community in the face of decades of deprivation, poverty and discrimination.

The Committee believes that the State has a duty to give people every opportunity to reach their full potential in every area of their lives.

Membership



Com Burke TD
Fine Gael



Joan Collins TD
Right to Change



Patrick Costello TD
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Senator Pauline O'Reilly
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Senator Ned O'Sullivan
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Chairperson's Foreword



The Joint Committee on Key Issues affecting the Traveller Community was established in September 2020 by Orders of both Houses of the Oireachtas. The Committee was set up to complete the work initiated by the previous Joint Committee on Key Issues affecting the Traveller Community during the 32nd Dáil and 25th Seanad. The Committee's Orders of Reference require it to undertake a programme of work examining four specific areas and making policy proposals related to them.

- physical health, mental health and suicide levels.
- school completion rates and educational attainment, particularly at second and third level compared to the settled population.
- labour market participation, having regard to the unemployment rate of 80 per cent among Travellers.
- access to housing and accommodation, including Traveller-specific accommodation, in the context of the significantly higher homelessness rate among Travellers compared to the settled population.

Over the years there have been numerous reports and studies produced which have highlighted the extreme difficulties and challenges faced by the Traveller community. Unfortunately, it is clear that these have not succeeded in improving conditions in Travellers' lives. With that in mind, our key aim in writing this report is to produce a list of focused and strong recommendations that, if implemented, could make a major contribution to improving outcomes and quality of life for Travellers.

The Committee sought and received written submissions from a wide range of stakeholders on each of the key issues in their work programme. We also met with a large number of stakeholders including Ministers and Government department officials, state agencies, NGOs and advocacy groups, social enterprises, the Ombudsman for Children, and most importantly, representatives from Traveller organisations, both national and local. It is the Committee's view that Traveller voices must be central in any examination of the issues faced by them, and that no solutions will be found for the serious inequalities faced by Travellers without the engagement and collaboration of the Traveller community themselves.

The Committee also undertook a series of visits to Traveller accommodation sites around the country, to allow members to see for themselves the conditions Travellers are forced to endure, and to meet with residents and hear their experiences first-hand. Despite the dire conditions on the sites, the Committee was particularly struck by the pride and care taken in the homes on site. The Committee offers a special thanks to the residents for welcoming them into their homes and sharing their stories and experiences.

The Committee would also like to thank all of the witnesses who met with them and everyone who made a submission: the Ceann Comhairle Seán Ó Fearghaíl; Collette Kelleher and the members of the previous Joint Committee during the previous Dáil and Seanad for their dedicated and enthusiastic work in beginning this examination; Oein DeBhairduin, whose work was invaluable to both Joint Committees; and the secretariat, both in this Dáil and Seanad and the previous, for their assistance in compiling this report.

On 29 November, the report was agreed to be published by the Committee.

The Joint Committee also requests that the issues of inequality raised in this report, and its recommendations, be the subject of a debate and action in both Houses of the Oireachtas.

As Chairperson, I want to personally recognise the work done by this Joint Committee. However, we cannot let this become just another report. The recommendations must be implemented. We can and we must put an end to the practices and policies that have failed the Traveller community.

Swuni a crush ain ala tober, bwikad as ayn.

Comthrome, atdmier a nok.

Recognising difference while being treated equally.

All we want is fairness.

Difríochtaí a aithint le linn caitheamh linn go cothrom.

Is é cothrom na féinne amháin atá uainn.



Senator Eileen Flynn

Chairperson,

Joint Committee on Key Issues affecting the Traveller Community

November 2021

Table of Contents

Membership	2
Chairperson’s Foreword	5
Executive Summary	11
Introduction	17
Chapter 1 – Health.....	21
Recommendations on Health.....	21
Introduction	24
Mental Health Crisis in the Traveller Community	25
Social Determinants of Health and Mental Health	26
Peer-led Supports and Services	28
Racism and Discrimination	30
Culturally Appropriate Services	30
National Traveller Health Action Plan	32
Ethnic data Collection and Planning.....	33
Chapter 2 – Education	36
Recommendations on Education	36
Introduction	39
National Traveller Education Strategy	40
Traveller Educational Supports.....	41
Reduced Timetables	42
Teaching Traveller Culture and History	44
Discrimination in the Education System	46
The Need for Accurate Data	49
Adult, Further and Higher Education	49
Chapter 3 - Employment.....	51
Recommendations on Employment.....	51
Introduction	54
Discrimination in seeking work	56
Discrimination in the Workplace	58
Engaging with Employers	59
The Traveller Economy.....	60

Social Enterprises	60
Education and Training	62
Labour Market Activation and Supports	63
Public Sector Employment	65
Disincentives in the Social Welfare System	67
National Strategies and Policy Initiatives	67
Ethnic and Equality Data Collection	69
Chapter 4 - Accommodation	71
Recommendations on Accommodation	71
Conditions in Traveller Accommodation	73
Data on Traveller Homelessness and Housing Preferences	74
Traveller Accommodation Expert Review	76
Culturally Appropriate Accommodation	77
Homelessness Crisis	78
Private Rental Market	81
Nomadism	82
Local Authority Provision and TAPs	82
Caravan Loan Scheme	84
Planning and Part 8	85
COVID-19	85
Visits to Traveller Accommodation Sites	86
Appendix 1 – Membership of the Joint Committee on Key Issues affecting the Traveller Community of the 32nd Dáil and 25th Seanad	88
Appendix 2 Committee Hearings	89
Appendix 3 – Submissions Received	92
Appendix 4 – Committee Terms of Reference	97

Executive Summary

1. Travellers face markedly worse health outcomes than the settled population. Their life expectancy is 15.1 years shorter for men and 11.5 times shorter for women. Traveller men have 4 times the mortality rate of the general population and Traveller women have 3 times the mortality rate of the general population. the infant mortality rate for Traveller children is 3.6 times the rate for the general population. Mortality rates for cancer, cardiovascular disease and other causes are significantly higher for Travellers.
2. There is also a crisis in mental health in the Traveller community. 90 per cent of Travellers agreed that mental health problems were common in their community, with suicide being the cause of 11 per cent of Traveller deaths. Travellers' daily experiences of racism and exclusion have a profound effect on their mental health.
3. The health status of Travellers is impacted by a range of social determinants, most severely by overcrowded and substandard living conditions.
4. Peer-led services have an important role in addressing Traveller health inequalities. Traveller Primary Health Care Projects (PHCPs) have had a positive impact on the physical and mental health of Travellers. All Traveller PHCP workers, mainly women, should be issued medical cards as standard, to avoid the prospect of pay increases pushing them over the income threshold for a medical card.
5. Concerns around racism and discrimination underpin Traveller's lack of engagement with health services, with 53 per cent of Travellers fearing unfair treatment from health care providers and over 40 per cent of Travellers being concerned that they are not always treated with respect and dignity. Health services must be provided in an inclusive and culturally appropriate and sensitive way. Anti-racism and cultural awareness training should be provided to all primary health care staff.
6. The development of a National Traveller Health Action Plan is included as an action under the National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy 2017 to 2021

(NTRIS). This plan should be published as a matter of urgency, with clear targets, indicators, outcomes, timeframes and budget lines.

7. Ethnic equality monitoring should be rolled out across all health administrative systems, to allow for accurate information, better social policy and service planning.
8. Travellers have severely worse educational outcomes than the general population, with lower retention and completion rates at all levels. Traveller specific education supports were cut following the financial crash in 2008. The segregation of Traveller education was phased out in a process of “mainstreaming”, but there are concerns that without focused supports within mainstream education, Traveller students are struggling. Traveller organisations have reported regression in the progression rates of Traveller students since these cuts were made.
9. The excessive application of reduced timetables for Traveller students in recent years is a point of concern, as these timetables can severely impact on their educational opportunities and outcomes. Reduced timetables were intended to be used only in very limited circumstances, but have been widely used as either a sanction, or when schools do not have sufficient resources to properly support a student. Long awaited new guidelines on reduced hours timetables were published by the Department of Education in September 2021 which require written consent from parents/guardians and that Tusla Education Support Service (TESS) must be notified before a reduced hours timetable can be applied. The guidelines will go into effect in January 2022.
10. The inclusion of Traveller culture and history in the school curriculum could have a huge positive effect on the experiences of Traveller students. It would help Travellers to feel that their culture is valued and would provide a greater understanding and appreciation to students from the general population of the contributions made by the Traveller community to Irish society.
11. The National Traveller Survey 2017 reported that four out of ten Travellers said that they or their children had been bullied in school because of their identity as a Traveller. A culture of low expectations for Traveller students is often reported,

and this can be internalised into feelings of inferiority and a belief that Travellers cannot succeed in education.

12. The collection and analysis of ethnic data can help eliminate forms of discrimination and justify positive and affirmative action to ensure that the specific needs of minority ethnic groups are met.
13. Adult learners face financial barriers when taking up education, with many fearing they will lose social welfare benefits. Role models and success stories are important sources for encouraging adults to take up educational opportunities.
14. There were 10,653 Travellers in the labour force in 2016; of these, 8,541 (80.2 per cent) were unemployed. Travellers who find employment tend to do so in advocacy or in Traveller organisations. Many Travellers who secure employment outside of these areas are often reluctant to reveal their Traveller status, due to fears of discrimination. The use of personal stories and lived experiences can have a powerful impact in breaking down assumptions and stereotypes and cultivating empathy.
15. 43 per cent of Travellers reported discrimination when seeking employment, while only 17 per cent of the general public stated that they would employ a Traveller. Cultural training for recruiters and recruitment agencies is important, as it is easy to gravitate towards a person who looks or sounds like oneself.
16. There is a need to connect employers with potential Traveller employees. A mentoring programme could instil confidence in job seekers from marginalised groups and allow them to begin building a network of contacts.
17. The traditional Traveller economy in areas such as market trading, horse-fairs and scrap collecting has collapsed, due to restrictive legislation and local bylaws. Despite this, several Traveller led social enterprises have been established in areas such as recycling and knitting, and these should be supported and facilitated.
18. There is an opportunity for public service employers to take a leadership role in Traveller employment. Internships and work experience placements can be a useful model for recruiting underrepresented groups such as Travellers. It is

important that any such scheme should not be an end in itself but must be part of a pathway towards permanent employment.

19. Many Travellers fear that taking up low paid or casual employment will lead to a loss of social welfare benefits. This fear must be addressed to encourage Travellers into such roles.
20. Previous employment strategies including Pathways to Work 2016-2020 have lacked any focus on the Traveller community. Travellers must be included in all such strategies and must be consulted at all stages of planning them.
21. Travellers are living in overcrowded and substandard accommodation across the country. The *No End in Site* report from the Ombudsman for Children highlighted the desperate living conditions on one halting site, including approximately 140 people using toilets and washing facilities designed for 40. Almost 1 in 3 Traveller households living in mobile or temporary accommodation have no sewerage facilities and 1 in 5 have no piped water source.
22. The 2020 count of Traveller households found 78 per cent of travellers live in standard accommodation and 22 per cent in Traveller specific accommodation. Local Authorities' data suggests that the majority of Travellers have a preference for standard social housing, but this is contested by Traveller organisations who report many Travellers apply for standard housing as they believe they will get a home faster. Tracking applicant's top three preferred housing options would provide clearer data.
23. Travellers have specific cultural considerations with regard to housing that must be taken into account, such as larger family sizes, the tradition of nomadism, the use of caravans and horsemanship. The Traveller led approved housing body Cena Culturally Appropriate Homes (Cena) is engaging with members of the Traveller community and working with architects to properly define what culturally appropriate accommodation for Travellers looks like.
24. Travellers are significantly more likely to be affected by the homelessness crisis in Ireland and are 22 per cent more likely to become homeless. The high level of "hidden homelessness", including overcrowding, couch surfing and precarious tenancies mean the homelessness crisis is worse than recorded in official

statistics. The ETHOS (European Typology on Homelessness)¹ definition of homelessness provides a broader classification of homelessness, and if adopted would give a clearer picture of the problem.

25. Although the private rental market is the most common exit from homelessness, Travellers face additional barriers in accessing it. Firstly, their larger family units mean finding a suitable home can be even more difficult. Secondly, Travellers are 22 times more likely to report experiencing discrimination when seeking housing than the settled population. It is also challenging for marginalised households with complex needs to find and maintain HAP tenancies in the absence of supports and interventions.
26. Nomadism is a deeply significant aspect of Traveller culture, and although the Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act 1998 gives statutory recognition to transient sites, there are currently no transient sites and no plans for the same in any of the 31 local authority areas. Additionally, the implementation of trespass legislation has had a severe impact on members of the Traveller community who want to engage in nomadism.
27. There has been a sustained pattern of local authorities underspending their allocated funding for Traveller specific accommodation going back years. Between 2008 and 2019, more than €72 million of funding was left unspent by local authorities.
28. Many proposed Traveller accommodation projects are blocked when local authority councillors vote them down under Part 8 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001-2015. This happens even when the projects are included in a Traveller Accommodation Programme previously agreed by the council members. The Traveller Accommodation Expert Review found that the control local authority members have over the final approval of proposals has been a significant contributor to the delay of and the failure to deliver Traveller-specific accommodation. Bypassing the Part 8 process could alleviate these delays and failures.

¹ The ETHOS Definition and Classification of Homelessness: Available [here](#)

29. Having investigated all of these issues, the Committee has compiled a list of achievable and hard-hitting recommendations which, if implemented, the Committee believes would have a dramatic impact on improving the lives of Travellers.

Introduction

30. The Joint Committee on Key Issues affecting the Traveller Community was established by Orders of both Houses of the Oireachtas in September 2020, to continue the work begun by the previous Joint Committee on Key Issues affecting the Traveller Community during the 32nd Dáil and 25th Seanad. As per its Orders of Reference, the Committee sought and received submissions and heard public hearings on four main topics:
- a. physical health, mental health and suicide levels.
 - b. school completion rates and educational attainment, particularly at second and third level compared to the settled population.
 - c. labour market participation, having regard to the unemployment rate of 80 per cent among Travellers.
 - d. access to housing and accommodation, including Traveller-specific accommodation, in the context of the significantly higher homelessness rate among Travellers compared to the settled population.
31. As part of its examination of housing and accommodation, the Committee also undertook a series of visits to Traveller accommodation sites including halting sites, both to see first-hand the conditions on the sites, and to hear directly from the residents their stories and lived experiences. The Committee was struck by the pride and passion the residents have in maintaining their homes and personal spaces, despite the substandard conditions and neglect of maintenance and upkeep of the public areas of the sites.
32. The statistics on issues facing the Traveller community are stark.
33. Suicide accounted for 11% of all Traveller deaths in 2010, with the suicide rate for male Traveller seven times higher than their settled counterparts and the suicide rate for female Travellers six times higher than their settled counterparts. Life expectancy is 15.1 years lower for Traveller men than for men in the general population and is 11.5 years lower for Traveller women than for women in the general population.
34. 28 per cent of Travellers leave school before the age of 13, compared to one per cent of the general population. Only eight per cent of Travellers have completed

education to Leaving Certificate level, compared to 73 per cent of non-Travellers, while only one per cent of Travellers aged between 25-64 have a degree, compared to 30 per cent of non-Travellers. Half of Travellers have poor functional literacy.

35. The unemployment rate in the Traveller community is 80.1 per cent. 43 per cent of Travellers surveyed reported facing discrimination when seeking employment, while only 17 per cent of the general public stated that they would employ a Traveller.

36. Almost 1 in 3 Traveller households living in mobile or temporary accommodation have no sewerage facilities and 1 in 5 have no piped water source. Travellers are 22% more likely to become homeless than their settled counterparts, with one local authority telling the Committee that 80 per cent of the homeless population in the local authority area were homeless.

37. The Committee was struck by the interconnected nature of the issues facing the Traveller community which they examined. Deficient and substandard living conditions precarious accommodation and homelessness have severely detrimental effects on both mental and physical health, and brutally impact Traveller children's ability to thrive in education. Lower educational outcomes have a damaging impact on employment opportunities. Chronic unemployment causes stress and has negative consequences for mental health. It is clear that these issues will not be solved in isolation and must be tackled through a whole of Government and a whole of society approach.

38. The Committee was also struck by the resilience of the Traveller community in the face of decades of deprivation, poverty and discrimination. During its meetings with Traveller organisations and individuals, the Committee found a vibrant, resourceful and distinct culture, and a people driven and proactive about addressing the inequalities faced by their community. The Traveller community includes many artists, writers, sportspeople and musicians and Traveller culture is rich and distinctive.

39. The Committee believes that the State has a duty to give people every opportunity to reach their full potential in every area of their lives. This duty is

particularly acute with regards to marginalised groups such as the Traveller community, who have fared poorly in a range of areas due to discrimination going back decades.

40. There have been numerous reports, policies and strategies over the years which have aimed to improve Travellers' quality of life. The Programme for Government contains eight commitments which include the Traveller community by name, across mental health, drug use, health, housing and education. NTRIS includes 149 actions across a range of areas. The Expert Review Group on Traveller Accommodation published their report in July 2019 and the Ombudsman for Children published a report in 2021 on the conditions faced by children on one halting site. Despite these and other initiatives, Travellers do not report improvements to conditions on the ground. It is the view of this Committee that improving the quality of life for Travellers is not solely an issue of policy but is also an issue of implementation and oversight. For that reason, the Committee recommends that the Houses of the Oireachtas should establish a standing committee to oversee all Traveller issues. This would include monitoring the implementation of the recommendations of this report, and the successor strategy to NTRIS, as well as examining other topics of Traveller life which this special Committee has not been able to address, due to time constraints, and its Orders of Reference. The Committee also believes that this standing committee should include the Roma community in its terms of reference, as they face similar problems of discrimination and marginalisation, as well as their own unique issues.

Chapter 1 – Health

Recommendations on Health

Recommendations on Health

1. Mandatory cultural awareness and anti-racism training should be rolled out across all State services that engage with the Traveller community.
2. There should be a ring-fenced health budget for the Traveller community within the Health Services Executive (HSE) that cannot under any circumstances be appropriated to make up for shortfalls elsewhere within the HSE.
3. Increased funding should be provided for the delivery of peer-led Traveller-specific mental health supports through Traveller Primary Health Care Projects in local areas to provide timely interventions in relation to poor mental health, to provide appropriate interventions in the event of an attempted suicide, and to provide supports to family members bereaved following a suicide.
4. Prioritise funding to examine the distinct needs of young members of the Traveller community who are vulnerable to suicide and develop an initiative to train peer support outreach workers within the community.
5. Traveller organisations should be resourced to develop new and effective community mental health programmes targeting specific groups (e.g., children, young people, older people, women, men, LGBTQI community members), building community resilience and empowerment. Support should be given to local Traveller projects to identify and research local needs and causes of mental health difficulties. Funding should be provided to local groups to enable the development and support of specific local mental health initiatives, addressing local needs including the need for increasing access to services.

6. The National Traveller Health Action Plan should be published as a matter of urgency and an independent implementation body, with ring-fenced budgets to drive delivery and implementation, should be established. The plan must be inclusive of clear targets, indicators, outcomes, timeframes and budget lines.
7. Reinstatement of the Traveller Health Advisory Committee and appointment of a Department lead on Traveller health and mental health to monitor and progress actions across Departments and initiatives.
8. All Travellers employed in Traveller Primary Health Care Projects should be entitled to a medical card.
9. Traveller specific health infrastructure, including Traveller Health Units and Traveller Primary Health Care Projects, should be protected and receive increased resources for their expansion and development in line with the National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy 2017 to 2021 (NTRIS) (Action 76).
10. Implementation and roll-out of ethnic equality monitoring, including a standardised ethnic identifier across all health administrative systems, to monitor access, participation and outcomes of Travellers, and to inform the development of evidenced-based policies and service.
11. There should be a ringfenced budget for a National Traveller Mental Health Strategy. A National Traveller Mental Health Steering Group should be established in partnership with all key stake holders including the Traveller community to oversee the development and implementation of the strategy.
12. The structures and steering group of the National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy should remain in place and in operation until the successor strategy to NTRIS is developed and implemented.
13. A National Traveller Mental Health Strategy, as promised in the Programme for Government, should be implemented, with a ringfenced budget. A National Steering Group made up of all key stakeholders, including the

Traveller community should be formed to oversee the development and implementation of the strategy.

14. A Traveller Counselling Service should be properly resourced in order to provide a national counselling service to Travellers.
15. A mental health advocacy service should be created for Traveller mental health.
16. A Traveller Specific Mental Health Awareness Campaign should be developed and delivered in partnership with the Traveller community, in particular with local groups.
17. Traveller employment in mental health services within the primary and specialist community mental health services, as trainers, service providers, etc should be encouraged. This would be an important step in addressing stigma, providing role models and ambassadors for the Traveller population in Ireland, sharing innate knowledge and insight into the community and Traveller culture. It would correspondingly serve as a source of much needed employment.
18. Innovative programmes and therapies centred on Traveller culture should be supported and developed. Particular attention should be given to the potential of Equine therapy and Traveller horse ownership as a mechanism for Traveller mental health promotion.
19. There should be a Cross Sectional approach to addressing the root causes of the mental health crisis in the Traveller community. National efforts to support Travellers' mental health should not occur in isolation, not just in relation to Traveller health but inclusive of all social determinants and, taking into account the different layers of systemic oppression over decades and the interplay between the multiple stressors that affect the mental health of Travellers.
20. The 2006 Expert Group on Mental Health Policy report '*A Vision for Change*' acknowledged the need for the provision of inclusive and respectful mental health services and recommended that mental health

services should be provided in a culturally sensitive manner. This recommendation should be further affirmed, established and realised within the delivery of services.

21. There should be an immediate report prepared in relation to the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic on the Traveller community, and appropriate actions should be taken to address all concerns raised in this report.

Introduction

41. The Joint Committee held three public meetings on the topic of mental health on 24 September 2019, 8 October 2019 and 15 October 2019, and two public meetings on physical health on 22 October 2019 and 5 November 2019. In addition, a large number of written submissions on the topics of mental health and physical health were sought and received.
42. Many of the witnesses and submissions made starkly clear the health inequalities faced by the Traveller community.
 - The Pavee Point submission states that life expectancy for Traveller men is 15.1 years less than men in the general population, and for Traveller women it is 11.5 years less than women in the general population.
 - Traveller men have 4 times the mortality rate of the general population and Traveller women have 3 times the mortality rate of the general population.
 - The Department of Health Drugs Policy and Social Inclusion Unit submission states that the infant mortality rate for Traveller children is 3.6 times the rate for the general population; the Institute of Public Health in Ireland (IPH) submission states that this is equivalent to that recorded in the general population around 40 years ago.
 - The Department of Health Drugs Policy and Social Inclusion Unit submission asserts that mortality rates for cancer, cardiovascular disease and other causes are significantly higher for Travellers. The

mortality rate for respiratory disease is 7.5 times higher among male Traveller is 7.5 times than that of the general population, and 5.4 times for female Travellers.

43. The Irish College of General Practitioners (ICGP) submission states that Traveller women are overrepresented in those experiencing severe maternal morbidity; of the 374 perinatal deaths in 2016, eight (2.1%) of the mothers identified as Irish Traveller compared to 0.7% of the population of women aged fifteen to forty-nine years identifying as Irish Traveller. Regarding infant mortality rates, the ICGP report that per 1,000 live births, infant mortality rate in the general Population is 3.9 whereas in the Traveller population it is 14.1.

44. The Minceirs Whiden submission states that the Traveller community is '*haemorrhaging people*' through chronic illness and ill health caused by poverty and poor living conditions, through addiction and suicide, social isolation and exclusion.

Mental Health Crisis in the Traveller Community

45. The Joint Committee recognises that there is a mental health crisis facing the Traveller community, as demonstrated by several statistics:

- The Behaviour and Attitudes Traveller Community National Survey² found that 90% of Travellers agreed that mental health problems were common in their community.
- The same survey also found that 82% of Travellers had been affected by suicide, with 26% affected by suicide within their immediate family.
- The All-Ireland Traveller Health Study (AITHS)³ indicated that suicide was the cause of 11% of all Traveller deaths in 2010.
- The Offaly Traveller Movement submission states that suicide rate for female Travellers is 6 times higher than their settled counterparts and 7 times higher for males.

² Available [here](#)

³ Available [here](#)

46. The Committee heard that there is often reluctance within the Traveller community to discuss mental health issues openly. The Exchange House submission states that there is often discomfort among Travellers with discussing mental health issues, which leads to Travellers not availing of mental health services until they are at a crisis point. The Traveller Counselling Service submission states that there is a strong stigma towards seeking help with emotional or mental health issues within the Traveller community. They recommend that a Traveller specific mental health awareness campaign should be developed and delivered in partnership with the Traveller community.
47. The Joint Committee acknowledges that experiences of racism, exclusion and discrimination that members of the Traveller community face on a daily basis have a profound and deeply troubling impact on their mental health and is a contributory factor to the crisis in mental health among Travellers. The Joint Committee heard claims that the last acceptable form of racism in Ireland is directed towards the Traveller community and that there is no acknowledgement of the racism that generations of Travellers in the State have suffered.
48. The National Traveller Mental Health Network submission states that the oppression of nomadism, the erosion of the Traveller economy and the increased obstacles Travellers face maintaining cultural practices such as keeping horses significantly impacts on Travellers' sense of identity and their mental health.

Social Determinants of Health and Mental Health

49. The Committee heard that the health status of Travellers is impacted by a broad range of social determinants. These include:
- Discrimination.
 - poor education outcomes.
 - lack of employment.
 - substandard living conditions.
50. Witnesses from the Department of Health noted the AITHS highlighted that health inequalities experienced by Travellers are rooted in these social determinants.

They outlined that €10 million a year is provided to the HSE for initiatives aimed at improving the health outcomes for Travellers, while further funding comes from the Dormant Accounts Fund.

51. Ms Brigid Quirke of Pavee Point told the Committee at its hearing of 22 October 2019 that realistically addressing Traveller health inequalities requires a whole-of-Government approach in address these determinants.
52. The Committee recognises that sub-standard living conditions have a particularly severe impact on Travellers' health, and that addressing these conditions would contribute significantly to improving Traveller's health. The Westmeath Traveller project submission highlights that substandard living conditions can lead to a range of medical issues, including chest infections, asthma, bronchitis, pneumonia, stress and depression. The National Traveller Women's Forum (NTWF) submission highlights the particular impact on women, as they spend more time in the home and are the primary carers and so *'bear the brunt of having to cope with basic conditions such as lack of clean running water, lack of adequate refuse collection, poor sanitation and unsafe areas for children to play'*. NTWF point out that the National Traveller Health Strategy in 2010 states *'There is little doubt that the living conditions of Travellers are probably the single greatest influence on health status, stress and infectious disease including respiratory'*.
53. The Galway Traveller Movement (GTM) submission highlights the fact that Travellers are not a homogenous group, with differences in age, gender, sexual orientation, levels of ability or disability, family status and other factors impacting on the difficulties faced by Travellers in their lives. In particular, GTM stresses that Traveller women face a particular *'treble burden of oppression'* as Travellers, as women, and as Traveller women. The GTM submission states that Traveller women have *'significant responsibility and play a huge role in family and community life as well as frequently acting as income earners albeit frequently in low paid, part time positions, and as carers for older relatives and those with a disability'*.

Peer-led Supports and Services

54. The importance of peer-led supports was emphasised to the Committee repeatedly. The Traveller Visibility Group submission states that there is a better uptake of health initiatives and services such as screenings and health checks when they are communicated to the community by peers. The submission also states that Travellers are more inclined to engage with health awareness programme or other training when Traveller organisations are directly involved in delivering the training.
55. The Traveller Counselling Service submission states that local Traveller groups are best placed to reach members of the Traveller community and address the strong stigma attached to seeking help for emotional and mental health difficulties among the Traveller community. As such, these groups should be funded to develop local mental health initiatives. The Traveller Counselling Service also call for more Travellers to be employed in mental health services, both to act as ambassadors and role models for the Traveller community, and to share their knowledge of and insight into the community and Traveller culture.
56. The Committee was advised that Traveller specific health infrastructure including Traveller Primary Health Care (PHC) Projects, which are peer led, have had a positive impact on the physical and mental health of Travellers. There are 27 Traveller Primary Health Care Projects, under the remit of eight Traveller Health Units (THUs). THUs fall within HSE Community Health Organisation (CHO) boundaries and are funded via CHO structures. The eight THUs are located across 9 CHOs. The Primary Health Care Projects are staffed by Travellers and adopt a peer-led approach, linking in with the families in each county and to ensure that the Travelling community is assisted to navigate the system for their health requirements. The success of these projects is shown in the AITHS, which reported that that:
- 83% of Travellers get their information from the Traveller Primary health Care workers.
 - 96% of Traveller children receive vaccinations.
 - Traveller women's health screening is two times higher than the general population.

57. The Committee heard that the majority of project workers are women, relying on social welfare payments and benefits associated with medical card eligibility. They work 8-12 hours per week, with capacity to take on additional duties and to expand their role. The capacity to increase their hours has been limited by recent pay rate increases, as they face the prospect of losing their medical card due to their income being slightly above the threshold. This leaves them with the option of either reducing their hours, and thus their income, or leaving their job. Multiple witnesses recommended that Traveller primary health care workers should be issued with medical cards as standard. This would involve approximately 300 medical cards. Considering the additional health pressures and situational predisposition towards ailments this is a very real consideration for community members engaging with the PHC Peer led supports.
58. The Pavee Point submission highlights that Traveller health has not received any new funding from the Department of Health since 2008. This is despite the fact that the Joint Committee on the Future of Mental Health Care in 2018 recommended that *'...more resources and funding should be targeted at the areas of highest need with particular attention to the Traveller Community and towards addressing suicide. This would be best achieved in conjunction with outcomes-based reporting which could track the impact of resources on areas of high need'*.
59. The National Traveller Mental Health Network submission also calls for the implementation of the recommendations of the Joint Committee on the Future of Mental Health Care to be implemented, specifically that *'as Sláintecare is implemented that the recommended increase to 10% for mental health services be ring-fenced and prioritised, with a portion of this budget ring-fenced for a National Traveller Mental Health Strategy'*. This call is also backed by the Traveller Counselling Service submission, which also calls for the establishment of a National Traveller Mental Health Steering Group, in partnership with all key stake holders including the Traveller community, to oversee the development and implementation of the strategy.

Racism and Discrimination

60. The Joint Committee acknowledges that experiences of racism, exclusion and discrimination that members of the Traveller community face on a daily basis have a profound and deeply troubling impact on their mental health and is a contributory factor to the crisis in mental health among Travellers at present. The All-Ireland Traveller Health Study 2010 (AITHS)⁴ found that 40% of Travellers reported being discriminated against when accessing health services, leading to a delay in accessing services, and a consequent worsening of health issues. The Traveller Counselling Service submission states that Travellers face a message that *'their community is primitive, backward, criminal and not wanted'* which causes low self-esteem, a lack of confidence and a loss of hope.

61. The Pavee Point submission states that racism and discrimination underpin Traveller's lack of engagement with and access to mental health services. Their submission highlights the findings of the All Ireland Traveller Health Study, including that:

- 53% of Travellers "worried about experiencing unfair treatment" from health providers.
- Over 40% of Travellers were concerned that they were not always treated with respect and dignity.
- Over 50% of Travellers had concerns over the quality of care they received when they engaged with services.
- 66.7% of service providers agreed that discrimination against Travellers occurs sometimes in their use of health services.

Culturally Appropriate Services

62. The importance of providing culturally appropriate and inclusive mental health services to minority groups was highlighted to the Committee. The Traveller Counselling Service submission states that not acknowledging and accommodating cultural differences can reinforce discrimination and inequality faced by minority groups. The 2006 Expert Group on Mental Health Policy report

⁴ All-Ireland Traveller Health Study: Available [here](#)

A *Vision for Change*⁵ acknowledged the need for the provision of inclusive and respectful mental health services and recommended that mental health services should be provided in a culturally sensitive manner. However, Thomas McCann of the Traveller Counselling Service told the Committee that this recommendation has not been acted upon.

63. The Clanwilliam Institute submission states that particularly when working with children and adolescents within a minority culture, consideration must be given to their lived experience, their relationships, their support structures and the narrative they have around their own mental health and gender identity. *'Standardised therapy approaches that privilege the socially constructed narratives of majority cultures may not attend well enough to community scripts of loyalty, of community co-operation, sense of belonging and of previous experiences of marginalisation and discrimination by mainstream groups, including health and social services.'*
64. Several witnesses warned the Committee that the monocultural design of health and mental health services can lead to a lack of engagement by Travellers. The Irish College of General Practitioners (ICGP) submission highlights a discrepancy in views on health provision, with GPs treating appointments as the start of a process in treating their patients whereas Travellers view the consultation as a single issue that should be dealt with in one visit. The ICGP states that in some cases, this can lead to Travellers visiting an Emergency Department if symptoms do not improve, instead of returning to their GP. The Wexford Traveller Development Group (WTDG) submission states that Travellers do not see a benefit in talking therapy, as settled councillors do not have the knowledge of real traveller culture and values, and so little rapport exists in those counselling relationships. Research cited by the Offaly Traveller Movement in their submission states that services or models that take a truly culturally competent approach have been shown to be four times more effective in meeting the needs of ethnic minority groups than those that do not.

⁵ Available [here](#)

65. Many witnesses and submissions called for anti-racism and cultural awareness training to be mandatory primary health care staff. Ms Breda O'Donoghue of the Traveller Visibility Group told the Committee at its hearing on 5 November 2019 that cultural awareness training for public service staff is necessary to ensure they are fully aware of Traveller culture and can engage with their clients in a culturally appropriate manner. *'Travellers are part of Irish society and need to be treated as such, with the same understanding and nuance that would be afforded to any individual coming in, looking for assistance from a public service'*.
66. Ms Concepta DeBrun of the HSE social inclusion unit, told the Committee at its hearing on 5 November 2019 that the approach taken to cultural awareness training is inconsistent, as it depends on the relationship to the local Traveller health unit; if one has a strong Traveller health unit, more of one's staff will be trained. The HSE social inclusion unit rely heavily on the peer support workers in the Traveller primary healthcare projects to provide culturally appropriate training.

National Traveller Health Action Plan

67. The Pavee Point submission (august 2019) states that they welcomed the development of a National Traveller Health Action Plan, as per Action 73 in the National Traveller Roma Inclusion Strategy (NTRIS). However, a draft plan circulated by the HSE National Office for Social Inclusion in March 2019 did not include dedicated resources, performance indicators, verification measures and an institutional mechanism to drive implementation. The HSE subsequently committed to redrafting the National Traveller Health Action Plan. The Pavee Point submission calls for the National Traveller Health Action Plan to be published and implemented as a matter of urgency.
68. The National Traveller Women's Forum (NTWM) submission on health states that the draft National Traveller Health Action Plan circulated in March 2019 was 'completely inadequate and demonstrated the lack of attention that the Department of Health are giving to addressing the health inequalities for Travellers'. The NTWF calls for the National Traveller Health Action Plan to be holistic, gender responsive and gender diversity aware, and recommend the

establishment of an independent body with ring-fenced budgets to drive delivery and implementation of the Plan.

Ethnic data Collection and Planning

69. The vast majority of the witnesses who appeared before the Joint Committee and those who made submissions called for the adoption of an ethnic identifier to allow for accurate information, better social policy and service planning. This was also referenced in AITHS in 2010 and was identified in NTRIS recommendations 67, 95 and 146, but it has not been implemented to date. It became evident to the Joint Committee over the course of the hearings that mental health services lack comprehensive data on Traveller service users. Information is not collected on ethnic or cultural backgrounds and significant gaps in knowledge on the access, participation and outcomes to mental health and suicide prevention services for Travellers exist. Mr Thomas McCann of the Traveller Counselling Service that statistics for self-harm in the Traveller community were needed to develop interventions at earlier stages, to prevent a build-up to crisis situations.
70. Ms Kate Mitchell of Mental Health Reform told the Committee at its hearing on 15 October 2019 of a broader gap in mental health services in that currently there is no national mental health information system, but only a limited set of key performance indicators, KPIs, which the services collect data about, including some information on waiting lists and similar. Ms Mitchell said that not having a full and comprehensive KPI suite and data collection is a fundamental issue, especially in community mental health services. Mental health services do not know how many people from ethnic minority communities, including the Traveller community, access our services, and lack KPIs for the quality of service provision and outcomes for people using those services.
71. Mr John Meehan, head of the National Office for Suicide Prevention told the Committee at its hearing of 15 October 2019 that it remains difficult to ascertain the levels of suicide among the Traveller community, partly due to data provided by the Central Statistics Office do not capture a wide range of information, including ethnicities. He also told the Committee that a ruling of suicide can only

be determined by a coroner, and coroner's reports do not include data on ethnicity.

Chapter 2 – Education

Recommendations on Education

Recommendations on Education

22. Restore the dedicated funding to Traveller Education cut in the 2011, 2012 period in full and ring fence it to provide supplementary educational support for members of the Traveller Community where they would benefit from same.
23. Ensure the policy of mainstreaming Traveller education delivers full benefit by providing extra resources where necessary and appropriate to Travellers within the mainstream educational provision.
24. The Traveller Culture and History in Education Bill 2018 should be enacted and fully implemented.
25. Targeted financial supports towards travel and childcare costs should be examined to allow wider uptake of education and training courses.
26. Intercultural and Anti-racism training should be rolled out to all serving teachers as a mandatory part of their Continuing Professional Development.
27. Affirmative action policies should be introduced to encourage more people from ethnic minority backgrounds, including Travellers, to enter teaching.
28. Due to the documented traumatic history of Traveller parents within the Irish schooling system, it is important to acknowledge that if a school environment feels unsafe, any interaction could retrigger trauma reactions and result in disengagement by the parent. School structures should be trauma informed and trauma responsive.

29. Successful projects such as the Yellow Flag Programme and TOBAR should be provided with a centralised, secure source of funding, to guarantee their continuance and allow for their expansion.
30. Following the publication of the guidelines on Reduced Timetables, the use of these timetables should be strictly limited to exceptional circumstances and monitored to ensure that they are being applied in the correct fashion, and with full and informed parental consent. The Committee recommends that where patterns of overuse of reduced timetables emerge that the Department of Education should seek a written rationale from the school concerned.
31. Travellers should not be discouraged from studying the full range of subjects at school as not studying the full range of subjects can result in reduced opportunities in later life.
32. A National Traveller Education Strategy should be developed and implemented as a matter of urgency.
33. Disaggregated data collection to be prioritised within the education system, in order to better allow for future planning.
34. All Traveller children should have access to an after-school club and these clubs should be supported with adequate resources.
35. Pathways and programmes that support Travellers into the teaching profession should be expanded to include other educational roles, such as school completion officers.
36. A report should be produced and published on what outreach services exist to work within Traveller communities and/or Tusla services that engage with Traveller and Roma families. The report should also examine how they promote the Early Childcare and Education (ECCE) pre-school scheme, as well as the Access and Inclusion Model (AIM) for Children with a Disability, within the Traveller and Roma communities in order to facilitate access for

every child to free pre-school from the age of three until they start school.

37. Early Childcare settings should be monitored to ensure the adherence to the principles underpinning both Aistear and Síolta and a review to determine if the model is working in terms of the real experience for Traveller and Roma children.
38. Awareness and cultural competency Training should be provided for Childcare Professionals with regard to Traveller culture and way of life.
39. A new mechanism to provide additional funding to non DEIS schools should be developed, so that they can provide breakfast clubs and homework clubs, alongside additional supports, where they are not yet available.
40. The liaison officer scheme should be rolled out to all schools. Travellers should be targeted and supported into these roles.
41. Up to date research in determining what issues Traveller children face in school should be commissioned, followed by a report with actionable recommendations towards supporting Traveller children through the education system.
42. A review of how the areas of intercultural, anti-racism, diversity, and intellectual and physical disability are dealt with in Teacher Education Programmes should be undertaken.
43. The Statutory Committee which advised the Minister for Education on initiatives which would address educational disadvantage, and which was abolished in 2012, should be re-established.
44. There should be targeted family literacy support programmes for parents of Traveller children to supported and funded, based on local need.

Introduction

72. Between November 2019 and December 2019, the Joint Committee held four days of hearings to engage with relevant stakeholders to discuss the issue of education and the Traveller community. The Committee also received submissions from stakeholders including Traveller representative organisations, and Government departments.

73. The educational disadvantages faced by the Traveller Community are starkly shown in the key statistics listed below:

- Only 13% of Travellers complete secondary education compared to 92% of the general population⁶.
- 13% of female Travellers are educated to upper secondary level or above, compared with 69% of the female general population⁷.
- 57% of male Travellers are educated to primary level at most, compared with 13.6% of the general population⁸.
- 28% of Travellers leave school before the age of 13, compared to 1% of general population⁹.
- Only 8% of Travellers have completed education to Leaving Certificate level, compared to 73% of non-Travellers.
- Only 1% of Travellers aged between 25-64 have a degree, compared to 30% of non-Travellers.
- Half of Travellers have poor functional literacy, compared to 9% of the general population.
- 17.7% of Traveller children have no formal education in comparison with 1.4% of the general population. Of the 115, 76 are women¹⁰.

⁶ Central Statistics Office (CSO) Press Statement Census 2016 Results Profile 8 - Irish Travellers, Ethnicity, and Religion. Available [here](#)
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⁷ Ibid

⁸ Ibid

⁹ ESRI – A Social Portrait of Travellers in Ireland 2017 Available [here](#)

¹⁰ CSO Press Statement Census 2016 Results Profile 8 - Irish Travellers, Ethnicity, and Religion

- 67.3% Traveller children live in families where the mother has either no formal education or primary education only¹¹.
- 62% of Travellers experience discrimination at school¹².

National Traveller Education Strategy

74. Several witnesses and submissions called for a National Traveller Education Strategy to be developed and implemented.

75. Following the 2006 Report and Recommendations for a Traveller Education Strategy from the Department of Education and Skills, a Traveller Education Strategy Advisory & Consultative Forum (TESACF) was established to advise on the implementation of a National Traveller Education Strategy. The National Traveller Women's Forum's (NTWF) submission states that the TESACF last met in 2015 and was abolished in 2017. This left a gap driving progress in Traveller education of several years before the launch of the National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy 2017 to 2021 (NTRIS). There are 14 actions relating to education under NTRIS.

76. As part of an action under NTRIS, four pilot programmes aimed at increasing Traveller and Roma participation in education at all levels were launched in Dublin, Galway, Wexford and Cork. These programmes were run by the Tusla Education Support Service (TESS) alongside the Department of Education, the Department of Children Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, the Department of Justice and Traveller and Roma organisations. In each area a team comprised of an Educational Welfare Officer, a Home School Community Liaison Coordinator and two Traveller / Roma workers work with local families, community groups and schools to increase Traveller and Roma attendance, participation and retention in education.

¹¹ Department of Children and Youth Affairs, State of the Nation's Children Ireland 2016. Available [here](#)

¹² Department of Health (2010) All Ireland Traveller Health Study. Dublin: Department of Health.

Traveller Educational Supports

77. Several witnesses highlighted to the Committee how cuts were made to Traveller specific educational supports after the financial crash of 2008. For example, the NTWF's submission states that Traveller specific school transport support was removed in September 2011. Pavee Point's submission states that The Visiting Teacher Service for Travellers (VTST) and Resource Teachers for Travellers (RTT) were both ended in September 2011, and that all Senior Traveller Training Centres were closed in June 2012. Pavee Point stated that funding for Traveller education supports were cut by 86.6% between 2008 and 2013, compared to a 4.3% cut in overall Government spending.

78. In his submission, Brian Harvey, social researcher, argued that many of these cuts were made as part of a process of 'mainstreaming' Traveller education; that is the phasing out of segregated Traveller education provision, and the inclusion of Traveller children and young people in mainstream education. The Department of Education submission confirms that mainstreaming has been a key educational objective in recent years. The Committee accepts and is aware of the difference between *Culturally segregated* and that of *Traveller community specific education*.

79. The Department of Education submission highlights investment of some €125million in the DEIS Plan¹³ for educational inclusion, while recognising that not all Traveller pupils attend DEIS schools. It also highlights a number of supports available to all schools, including Resource Teacher Allocations, the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) and TUSLA Educational Welfare Officers. It also points out additional pupil capitation for Travellers of €70 per pupil at primary level and €201 per pupil at post primary level.

80. Mr Brian Harvey's submission highlighted how Traveller organisations had always argued that in order for mainstreaming to be successful, the educational

¹³ Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS) (DES, 2005) forms part of the Department of Education and Skills' social inclusion strategy to support children and young people experiencing educational disadvantage. Schools included in the DEIS programme receive additional supports in recognition of the proportion of their students from marginalised backgrounds. Essentially, DEIS schools are designated disadvantaged schools

progress of Travellers would need to be carefully monitored, with additional supports available if required. Pavee Point's submission quotes the 2016 European Commission Assessment of Ireland, which states that *'A mainstreamed approach is only sufficient when outcomes are identical for all components of the target groups; when evidence shows a clear gap between the situation of Roma and Travellers versus the rest of society (e.g., regarding their health and housing situation) policies should be adjusted and specific measures should also be developed'*.

81. While there has been no specific research done on the effects of these funding changes, the Committee heard that Traveller organisations are reporting a regression in educational progression among Travellers since the Traveller-specific supports were cut. The NTWF's submission states that progression from primary to post-primary education for Traveller children dropped from the 100% level achieved in the previous decade.

82. The Education and Training Board Ireland's (ETBI) submission states that schools in their sector have noted that the loss of the Visiting Teacher for Travellers Service (VTTS) has negatively impacted on the capacity to make positive connections between family, community and school supports. They call for the re-introduction of a repurposed VTTS to enhance the link between home and school.

Reduced Timetables

83. Several witnesses flagged to the Committee a growing trend in recent years of placing Traveller student at both primary level and post-primary level on reduced hours timetables, often without giving notice to their parents or receiving their consent. The Committee heard that the use of reduced timetables can severely impact on a child's educational opportunities and outcomes, with side-effects including:

- Students feeling disconnected from school.
- Students falling further behind in their studies.

- Students being blocked from studying key subjects (e.g., Irish) which can impact on their progression to third level education.
- Parents feeling powerless to question the reduced timetable, for fear that their child will be expelled.

84. The Joint Committee on Education and Skills Interim Report on the Committee's Examination on the Current Use of Reduced Timetables, (2019)¹⁴ addressed the use of Reduced Timetables in general. It also looked at how they have been applied to Traveller students. Deputy Jan O'Sullivan, a member of the Joint Committee on Education and Skills at the time of the report, told the Committee at its hearing on 26 November 2019 that a proportionately large number of Traveller children were being placed on reduced timetables. The interim report stated that reduced timetables can have a double negative impact on Traveller children in primary school. Traveller children are losing out on education in primary school, but they are then expected to go into post-primary school and be able to deal with increased subjects and multiple teachers during a much longer day. The interim report also stated that parents worry about their children falling behind in school, leading to frustration at not understanding what they are being taught. Parents are also left with having to cover the hours when their children should be in school.

85. The Committee heard that while reduced timetables were intended to be used only in very limited circumstances, in practice they were being widely used as either a sanction, or when schools do not have sufficient resources to properly support a student.

86. The lack of data or collated information on the use of reduced timetables was highlighted by the NTWF's submission. The submission states that that in the absence of guidelines on the use of reduced hours timetables, they have been used as a response to a child's challenging behaviour when there is a lack of available learning supports for the student, or as a disciplinary method.

¹⁴ Available [here](#)

87. The Department of Education on 16 September 2021 published long awaited guidelines on the use of reduced timetables in schools¹⁵ following calls over several years to do so. These guidelines aim to ensure that reduced timetables are used only where absolutely necessary, and in the best interest of the student. They state that written consent from parents / guardians is required, and that TESS must be notified. They also state that as reduced timetables should be mutually agreed between the school and the parent/guardian, the issue of an appeal should not arise, but that consent can be withdrawn at any time. Where parental/guardian consent is not given or subsequently withdrawn and the school proceeds or continues with a reduced school day, this is effectively a suspension and the relevant procedures in relation to a suspension apply. These guidelines will go into effect in January 2022.
88. Restoration of full education hours alone does not remedy the identified disconnection from schools, Traveller students falling further behind in their studies, Traveller students being blocked from studying key subjects (e.g., Irish) or parental powerlessness in questioning reductions. A resourced strategy, with a yearly report, should be put in place in order to oversee any deficits developed by misapplication of the reduced hours policy to ensure that no Traveller child is disadvantaged or undermined in educational progressions.

Teaching Traveller Culture and History

89. The Committee was told that the inclusion of Traveller culture and history could have a huge positive effect on the experiences of Traveller students. The Pavee Point submission on education highlighted two main benefits. Firstly, it would help Travellers to feel that their culture is valued and welcomed by the education system, boosting their self-worth and self-esteem, and improving their mental health. Secondly, it would provide a greater understanding and appreciation to students from the general population of the contributions made by the Traveller community to Irish society and help to tackle prejudices and stereotypes. The Committee heard of the need to “normalise difference”, so that children of different cultures and backgrounds feel valued in the education system. Ms

¹⁵ Guidelines for the use of Reduced School Days in Schools. Available [here](#)

Catherine Joyce of the Blanchardstown Traveller Development Group told the Committee in oral evidence on 12 November 2019 that Travellers cannot be treated equally within the education system unless their lived experience, culture and identity is reflected positively in schools. Education in and on Traveller Culture and History should not be considered supportive to Traveller students alone, but to the entire Educational system and its recipients.

90. Mr Oein DeBhairduin told the Committee in oral evidence on 19 November 2019 that although since 2001 the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) has made recommendations that Traveller culture and history should be included in the curriculum; this has so far not been widely implemented.

91. In 2018, the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment were asked by the Department of Education and Skills to carry out an audit on Traveller culture and history in the curriculum, which was completed in 2019. This audit stated that in order to *'contribute to addressing any issues of bias, prejudice, stigmatisation and discrimination experienced by members of the Traveller community the curriculum must be grounded in principles of intercultural education that encourage social acceptance, promote equity, inclusion, fairness and respect for and celebration of cultural identity, language and values'*.

92. On 1 July 2021 The Traveller Culture and History in Education Bill 2018, which would make the teaching of Traveller culture and history obligatory progressed to Committee stage. The Department of Education submission, when discussing the 'Traveller Culture and History in Education Bill 2018' states that *'Promotion of knowledge and understanding of Traveller culture and history in schools will help build a recognition of the important value of Traveller culture and history to this country. Recognising and respecting Traveller culture and history ensures that relationships based on trust, respect and understanding can be built across all cultures'*. Promotion of Traveller History and Culture, in light of historical actions and state practices is not considered sufficient. Direct teaching of Traveller Culture and History, within an integrative and subject expansive manner is required.

93. There should be a review and report of the processes, complaints, handling of bullying in relation to Traveller children in Education in relation to discrimination and racism.

Discrimination in the Education System

94. The Committee heard that Traveller students face racist bullying and discrimination in schools daily. The National Traveller Survey 2017¹⁶ reported that four out of ten Travellers said that they or their children had been bullied in school because of their Traveller ethnicity. Mr Martin Collins of Pavee Point told the Committee that many Traveller children feel unable to disclose their identity as Travellers.

95. Ms Maria Joyce of the NTWF told the Committee at its hearing on 12 November 2019 that schools need to have a real understanding of the ongoing racism and exclusion experienced by Traveller students. The NTWF submission said: “Schools need to have a real understanding of the ongoing racism and exclusion experienced by their Traveller students instead of burying their heads in the sand and pretending they believe *‘that everyone is treated the same’* when they know *that’s not the case. Children respond well to honesty so from the outset teachers should not be afraid to talk to Traveller children as Travellers. Traveller children should not have to hide their identity at school they should be made feel that school is a safe place to be’*.”

96. The Committee heard from several witnesses that many schools have a culture of low expectations for Traveller students. Mr Martin Collins of Pavee Point told the Committee in oral evidence on 19 November 2019 that it is a misconception to say that Travellers drop out of education, but that they are pushed out. He also warned that such a culture of low expectations can become a self-fulfilling prophecy. The low expectations towards Travellers can be internalised, and Travellers can feel that they are not good enough for education and cannot pursue their chosen career. Mr Collins stated that the people best placed to break this internalised inferiority complex are Traveller organisations, who do a lot of

¹⁶ National Traveller Community Survey 2017: Available [here](#)

work on cultural identity, self-esteem and confidence. However, Traveller organisations must be given the resources to do this work.

97. The Committee was informed about the Yellow Flag Programme (YFP), a whole school initiative which supports schools to celebrate diversity, promote inclusion and challenge racism. This programme is operated by the Irish Traveller Movement (ITM). In October 2018, the Yellow Flag Programme conducted an independent evaluation of their participating schools:

- 70% of the schools said their staff had a better understanding of racism.
- 72% said their staff had a better understanding of cultural diversity.
- 63% said their staff had the opportunity to discuss and raise relevant issues.

98. The YFP in their submission calls for mandatory anti-racism and cultural awareness training for all teachers as part of their continuous professional development (CPD). This call was echoed by Mr Oein DeBhairduin in oral evidence on 19 November 2019, as there is a wide array of opinions and practices, deliberate or unconscious, that can be devastating to the young.

99. Ms Shreya Chaturvedi of YFP told the Committee at its hearing on 19 November 2019 that there is a backlog of schools that want to take part in the programme but cannot participate due to a lack of resources and funding.

100. Mr Bernard Joyce of the Irish Traveller Movement told the Committee in oral evidence on 19 November 2019 that teachers are role models in schools; and warned that *'if they come with certain views and preconceived ideas it can have a significant knock-on effect on young people's expectations and achievements'*.

101. Mr Oein DeBhairduin told the Committee at its hearing on 19 November 2019 that the education system seems to be either disinterested in or having difficulty in engaging with Travellers. Mr DeBhairduin said that that there is a widespread misconception that Travellers do not value education. He stated that Travellers

appreciate education, and the doors that it can open, but that many of these doorways appear locked to Travellers.

102. The Committee was told of the importance of having teachers who are Travellers in classrooms, who can act as role models for the community. Mr Martin Collins of Pavee Point told the Committee in oral evidence on 19 November 2019 that supporting Travellers to become teachers is important as the only way one can develop trust and confidence in any institution is to see one's own Ms Maria Joyce of NTWF also told the Committee in oral evidence on 12 November 2019 that having teachers who are Travellers is important in order to enhance the visibility of Traveller culture within schools. She called for supports and scholarships to be put in place to increase the number of Travellers going into teaching.

103. The Committee was told about the Tobar programme, run by the Marino Institute of Education (MIE), which is an intervention-based initiative with the purpose of increasing access to Initial Teacher Education (ITE) programmes for Travellers. TOBAR established a two-strand approach for its intervention. Strand 1 focuses on Traveller students (15-18 years old) who aspire to become teachers; Strand 2 focuses on Travellers who may want to enrol on the B.Ed. programme through the mature entry route or for those who have already completed an undergraduate degree to enrol on the Professional Master of Education (PME) programme.

104. Dr Teresa O'Doherty of MIE told the Committee in oral evidence on 26 November 2019 that the Traveller post primary students they have worked with often showed a lack of belief in themselves, as well as a lack of belief in the education system, and higher education. This can lead to them dropping down to lower levels in subjects, which can mean they lack the minimum entry requirements for ITE courses, or other third level courses. Dr O'Doherty reports that TOBAR's engagement with schools has been extremely positive, but that uncertainty over funding has led to post primary students withdrawing from TOBAR supports. MIE recommended to the Committee that consideration be

given to establishing a centralised funding stream to support Travellers to pursue ITE programmes.

The Need for Accurate Data

105. The need for accurate data around the educational participation and attainment levels of Travellers was highlighted repeatedly to the Committee. Pavee Point's submission states that the collection and analysis of ethnic data can help eliminate forms of discrimination and justify positive and affirmative action to ensure that the specific needs of minority ethnic groups are met. Pavee Point are concerned at the lack of available disaggregated data on post primary school intake. The NTWF submission states that the almost complete lack of data on Traveller participation in education significantly impacts on the ability of the state to equality proof any policies or programmes. NTWF calls for appropriate desegregated data collection to be prioritised within the education system, stating that the analysis of this data is needed to ensure targets and actions are having an impact for Traveller women and girls in education and to put in place the necessary appropriate targeted initiative.

Adult, Further and Higher Education

106. The Committee heard of the difficulties and barriers faced by Travellers in accessing adult, further or higher education. Less than one percent of Travellers go on to third level education. The ETBI in their submission identified several barriers to Travellers accessing further education and training. These include:

- Low Confidence and self-esteem.
- Negative experience of education.
- Childcare costs.
- Transport costs.
- Loss or reduction in benefits, or fear of the same.
- Suitability of courses.
- Lack of awareness of Further Education and Training.

107. There should be a review of educational access, in light of consideration of the space being more culturally aware and 'safe': towards an ascertainment of

wider community processes being more, or less progressive; towards positive and progressive educational attainment.

108. The financial burden of education was highlighted repeatedly to the Committee. ETBI called for clarity to be provided around the retention of benefits in education, as learners often do not take up places due to fears that their benefits will be reduced. Oein DeBhairduin, in his submission, reported anecdotal evidence that many Travellers are unable to afford necessities for third level education such as travel expenses or accommodation. Ms Catherine Joyce of the Blanchardstown Traveller Development Group highlighted in oral evidence at the Committee hearing on 12 November 2019 that returning to education as a mature student carried additional financial burdens. She stated that by the age of 24, members of the Traveller community are most likely married, with children, and will also face additional issues such as a lack of access to accommodation, services or goods.

109. Role models and success stories being spread through word of mouth were highlighted to the Committee as important for encouraging adults to take up educational opportunities. In 2017 AONTAS found that of the 254 learners engaged with through the National Further Education and Training Learner Forum, 59% heard about their course through word-of-mouth. AONTAS recommend that positive role models and success stories of Travellers who have participated in education should be highlighted. Ms Catherine Joyce of the Blanchardstown Traveller Development Group told the Committee in oral evidence that many Travellers view third level education as not being for them, because they feel that it will not lead to a job where they do not experience discrimination or acquire skills that they can bring back and use in their community. Hearing of other Travellers who had benefited from education could go towards countering these attitudes.

Chapter 3 - Employment

Recommendations on Employment

Recommendations on Employment

45. A comprehensive national Traveller employment action plan should be developed, resourced and implemented.
46. Traveller organisations should be supported and resourced to play roles they deem to be appropriate in addressing unemployment amongst Travellers. Traveller organisations should be consulted during the planning stages of all employment initiatives, and these should include specific targets for Travellers and Roma.
47. There should be formal positive action measures for recruiting Travellers to the public sector. These programmes need to be led (and funded) from central government. The Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (DPER) should be the lead department as it fits within their remit in terms of public sector reform. Recruitment and employment practices should follow the good practices identified in research.
48. Specific hiring targets for Travellers should be introduced for public service and Civil Service bodies. In conjunction with this, minimum requirements for all public sector recruitment campaigns should be examined to ensure that they are necessary, and do not needlessly exclude or discourage Travellers from applying.
49. An awareness campaign should be aimed at employers and recruiters to promote the skills and knowledge base available within the Traveller community. The benefits of cultural awareness training for employers, recruiters and staff should be emphasised to all private sector employers with a particular focus on multi-national companies in receipt of State grants, etc.

50. Greater supports should be provided to social enterprises - these could include a community asset transfer policy to enable community organisations and social enterprises to make a request for land and buildings from local authorities and other public bodies. An additional funding stream should be established for CSP places for Traveller Projects particularly for new start up social enterprises.
51. The Community Services Programme should be expanded with a particular focus on areas where there are a large number of Travellers living to give Travellers who are not employed or have not been employed a positive experience of employment.
52. The work placement scheme being piloted in the Department of Justice should be rolled out across all Government departments and other public bodies. Outcomes for participants of the scheme should be monitored to ensure that it leads toward permanent employment.
53. Culturally appropriate apprenticeship and internship schemes should be developed in areas of traditional Traveller enterprise. Outcomes for participants should be monitored to ensure the schemes lead towards permanent employment. The Committee recommends the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science and the Department of Social Protection investigate further how internships / apprenticeships can be used as a vehicle to gaining fulltime employment beyond the date of the internship / apprenticeship.
54. Appropriate positive action measures should be put in place for all apprenticeship programmes. Culturally appropriate apprenticeship and internship schemes should be developed in areas of traditional Traveller enterprise. Outcomes for participants should be monitored to ensure the schemes lead towards permanent employment.
55. The Traveller Graduate Network should be supported in its provision of mentoring programmes, workshops and job fairs.

56. All administrative systems of agencies involved in employment activation and support should include a standardised ethnic identifier to monitor access, participation and outcomes of Travellers, and to inform the development of evidenced-based policies.
57. The Department of Social Protection should fund the current Traveller liaison workers network who could link employment ready Travellers with specific employers.
58. Cultural Awareness and anti-racism training should be mandatory for all staff working in employment activation and support.
59. The Department of Social Protection should hold further Traveller employment events, similar to the Job Week 2020 event, which could include job fairs, CV workshops and interview skills training. Traveller organisations should be liaised with on how best to promote these events to members of the Traveller community, and on what type of events would be most useful.
60. An impact assessment needs to be undertaken on the effect of national legislation and byelaws on restricting the Traditional Traveller economy and measures taken to mitigate their impact.
61. The reformed NTRIS employment and enterprise subcommittee should prepare and progress a new action and outcome focused strategy for Traveller employment for immediate implementation and for inclusion in the next iteration of NTRIS, due on foot of publication of the EU Roma Strategic Framework for Equality, Inclusion and Participation for 2020– 2030.
62. The Department of Social Protection should take steps to ensure access to secondary benefits does not present a barrier to employment for Travellers, in particular given the health inequalities experienced by this community, and to ensure that Travellers are fully informed of their rights and entitlements in this regard.
63. The Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration, and Youth should develop and implement a strategy to enable full and effective

implementation of the public sector equality and human rights duty by employment and enterprise service providers in the public sector.

64. Local Development Companies should take specific actions to increase uptake of programmes by Travellers that result in employment opportunities.

65. Participants who were far from the Labour Market, (including members of the Traveller Community), should be allowed to remain on both CE and TÚS schemes for extended periods. This could be measured by previous work experience before coming on such schemes.

66. Similarly, people who have been far from the Labour Market before taking up employment should be allowed to retain their medical cards, if they have one, for at least five years after taking up employment.

Introduction

110. The Joint Committee held five public meetings on the topic of Traveller employment on 10 December 2019, 17 December 2019, 20 April 2021, 4 May 2021 and 18 May 2021. Additionally, a large number of written submissions on the topic were sought and received.

111. The Joint Committee recognises that the unemployment level among the Traveller community is on an enormous scale. The 2016 Census¹⁷ found that:

- There were 10,653 Travellers in the labour force in 2016; of these, 8,541 (80.2 per cent) were unemployed.
- The labour force participation rate among Irish Travellers was 57 per cent compared with 61.4 per cent for the general population.
- Among Traveller women aged 15 or over 972 were at work while 2,938 were looking after the home, representing 30.4 per cent.

¹⁷ Census of Population 2016 – Profile 8 Irish Travellers, Ethnicity and Religion. Available [here](#)

- Almost 1 in 8 (11.3%) of Travellers indicated they were unable to work due to a disability, nearly three times the equivalent rate for the general population (4.3%).

112. Galway Traveller Movement (GTM) point out that the unemployment rate of 80.1 per cent is only slightly lower than the 84.3% unemployment rate in census 2011 which was the height of the recession, and it is higher than the 74.9% unemployment rate of 2006. The Department of Social Protection submission states that while overall employment and unemployment levels of the general population are influenced by prevailing economic conditions, Traveller employment is less so. The Saint Stephen's Green Trust (SSGT) submission on employment states that a study by the Economic and Social Research Institute found that after controlling for age and education only 11 % of Travellers of working age were in employment in 2011 compared to 66 % in the general population.

113. The Committee heard that factors which contribute to this extremely high level of unemployment include discrimination and a reluctance to employ Travellers, the decimation of traditional Traveller employment areas such as recycling and horse care, and a lack of educational attainment which prevents Travellers gaining qualifications that would allow them to apply for jobs.

114. A review and report on the employment of Travellers within various state supported schemes, Traveller NGO's and the wider platforms is needed in order to assess how many community members are engaged external to the Traveller specific spaces and economy, towards action and practical steps of extending employment options.

115. The Joint Committee heard that for Travellers who do find employment, this tends to be in the area of advocacy or in Traveller organisations. Additionally, many Travellers who secure employment outside of these areas are often reluctant to reveal their Traveller status to their employers and colleagues, fearing discrimination and racism.

116. The gendered nature of unemployment was highlighted by Dr Frances McGinnity, who told the Committee in oral evidence on 20 April 2021 that

Traveller women are a little more likely than Traveller men to complete secondary education but are less likely to be at work, especially married women and mothers. This further limits Traveller community members, in the engagement of the wider array and reality of workforce options, which is a requirement for Travellers.

Discrimination in seeking work

117. The discrimination faced by Travellers when seeking to access employment was repeatedly raised. The reluctance of many employers to hire Travellers was discussed, with anecdotal evidence of Travellers failing to be hired on the basis of their name or address was presented. The Committee noted that there is a widespread idea that Travellers should employ Travellers and that Travellers should work in the Traveller NGOs, which is not treating the community fairly.
118. The 2017 Traveller Community Survey¹⁸ found that 43 per cent of Travellers reported discrimination when seeking employment, while only 17 per cent of the general public stated that they would employ a Traveller. The Irish Traveller Movement (ITM) submission on employment cites the 2017 Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission report *Who Experiences Discrimination in Ireland*¹⁹ which found that Travellers are ten times more likely to experience discrimination in seeking work than White Irish individuals.
119. The Kerry Travellers Health Community Development Project (KTHCDP) reported in their submission numerous anecdotal accounts of Travellers failing to access work placements necessary for training courses and apprenticeships and being refused jobs, based on their Traveller identity. One Traveller told how they were offered a job when applying using their Irish name, and when they revealed their Traveller status, the job offer was rescinded. *‘She tells the employer at her induction that she is a Traveller. The employer tells her that her business will suffer if her clients know there is a Traveller working there as Travellers are unclean. She apologised, and retracts the job offer. The Traveller woman doesn’t*

¹⁸National Traveller Community Survey 2017: Available [here](#)

¹⁹ Who Experiences Discrimination in Ireland? 2017. Available [here](#)

want to legally challenge as she is afraid the employer will damage her reputation in the particular industry’.

120. The Committee heard that of the Travellers who do secure employment, many of them do so within Traveller organisations. Mr Hugh Friel of Donegal Travellers Project (DTP) told the Committee in oral evidence on 17 December 2019 that approximately 94% of employed Travellers in Donegal are employed by DTP. Mr Friel also told the Committee that many Travellers say they are stuck in Traveller organisations because while they have the qualifications and the skills to take up other employment, they do not have the platforms due to discrimination. Ms Rachel Mullen of Values Lab told the Committee that the peer-led services such as the Primary Health Care Services should allow for more progression into mainstream employment within those particular services.

121. The importance of networks of connections, often informal, when seeking employment was highlighted to the Committee, in particular when seeking employment for the first time. Ms Rachel Mullen of Values Lab told the Committee at its hearing of 4 May 2021 that a lack of such connections or networks is a key barrier for people in terms of getting that first foothold into a job. One successful example of such a network is the Graduate Network for Travellers, for third level students and graduates from the Traveller community. Ms Jeanne McDonagh of the Open Doors Initiative told the Committee at its hearing of 20 April 2021 that the Graduate Network for Travellers is important, as it creates role models and peer support. *‘That feeds into mentoring because if one cannot see it, one cannot be it. One needs to have people in place to whom one can aspire and talk, as well as learn from’.*

122. Ms McDonagh also told the Committee of the importance of cultural training for recruiters and recruitment agencies. *‘It is easy to mirror oneself, especially in recruitment. If a recruiter sees someone who looks like them, talks like them and went to the same school, the natural inclination is to gravitate towards them. We need to get recruiters to see difference because they are the gatekeepers’.* Ms McDonagh told the Committee that the Open Doors Initiative are having discussions with national recruitment agencies about how to get cultural training into the recruitment area.

Discrimination in the Workplace

123. Several submissions and witnesses highlighted that Travellers in employment often face discrimination based on their membership of the Traveller community. This often takes the form of microaggressions. Many Travellers in employment are reluctant to reveal their Traveller status to employers or colleagues for fear of discrimination. The Cork Equal and Sustainable Communities Alliance (CESCA) submission reports that Travellers in Cork are targeted because of their surname, accent or address. Ms Kathleen Sherlock of Mincéirs Whiden told the Committee in oral evidence on 10 December 2019 that Anti-Traveller racism continues unchecked in workplaces, as well as in the education system and in society as a whole.
124. The Clondalkin Travellers Development Group (CTDG) submission states that many Travellers employed outside of Traveller organisations and networks actively conceal their identity to extend their employment possibilities.
125. Ibec in their submission recommends that the use of personal stories and lived experiences can have a powerful impact in breaking down assumptions and stereotypes and cultivating empathy and compassion, similarly to how the stigma around discussing mental health has been addressed in recent years.
126. Ibec also cite research by Deloitte that found 61 per cent of people hide some key aspect of themselves at work, as they do not feel secure enough to reveal it. This can cause feelings of isolation and stress, lead people to disengage from the organisation, affect productivity, and damage their mental and physical health. Ibec recommends implementation of cultural awareness training or the specific inclusion of the Traveller Community in diversity and inclusion training for employers to ensure that unconscious bias and prejudice is addressed in the workplace and employees develop skills and awareness of working in a culturally diverse workforce.
127. The Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU) submission highlights the concept of the integrated workplace, developed by the Equality Authority, ICTU, Ibec and other partners in 2006. Integrated workplaces:
- Are free from discrimination and harassment.

- Welcome migrant workers and ethnic minority groups (including Travellers) as employees, customers or service users.
- Take practical steps to achieve full equality in practice.
- communicate a message promoting greater equality within the wider culturally diverse community served by the business.

ICTU is, with Ibec and IHREC, currently seeking to revive this work.

128. The Workplace Relations Commission reported to the Committee that 2,811 specific employment equality workplace-related complaints were received by the WRC between 2016-2018 of which 18 referenced membership of the Traveller community as primary or one of the grounds for discrimination.

Engaging with Employers

129. The need to engage with employers to promote the potential benefits of hiring Travellers was raised in several submissions. Several proposals were made including schemes to link employers with potential employees from the Traveller community, cultural awareness training for employers and staff, and Travellers already in employment acting as role models.

130. The Open Doors Initiative recommends the establishment of a mentoring programme, which employers should be encouraged to join, that would instil confidence in job seekers from marginalised groups, allow them to begin a support network and lead them through applying for jobs and interview skills.

131. The Cork Equal and Sustainable Communities Alliance (CESCA) submission recommends that there is a need for a service which would connect Travellers to specific employers. Traveller organisations could act as liaisons between Travellers and employers in the service, offering support to both, to provide reassurance and develop trust.

132. Ms Rachel Mullen of Values Lab recommended to the Committee in oral evidence that network of Traveller employment liaison workers, employed through the Department of Social Protection, could act as a link to bring Travellers into employment and link them with potential employers.

The Traveller Economy

133. The collapse of the traditional Traveller economy in areas such as market trading, horse-fairs and scrap collecting was highlighted to the Committee. The role of national legislation and local byelaws in restricting such activities was raised. Several examples of Traveller-led social enterprises were presented as both sources of Traveller employment, and examples of Traveller entrepreneurship. The GTM submission highlights that increased regulations in areas previously key to the Traveller economy have had the effect of pushing Travellers out of these industries, for example the anti-trespass legislation (Housing (Miscellaneous provisions) Act 2002), the Casual Trading Act (2005), the Control of Horses Act (1996), the EU directive on end of life of vehicles (2000), as well as legislation on scrap metal. GTM states that there was no impact assessment undertaken on the effect that these regulations would have on the Traveller economy, and no measures taken to mitigate their impact.
134. The Cork Equal and Sustainable Communities Alliance (CESCA) submission states that traditionally, Travellers would have been self-employed, working as market traders, scrap collectors and at horse fairs. However, an increase in regulations and by-laws surrounding these areas has made working in them extremely difficult. The Clondalkin Traveller Development Group (CTDG) submission states that policies such as the repression of nomadism and legislation on market traders have forced many Travellers, particularly women, out of the labour market.
135. The Open Doors Initiative submission states that people from marginalised backgrounds have substantial entrepreneurial capability and yet no national strategies or tailored programmes have been designed to enable people from these marginalised communities to pursue self-employment as a career opportunity.

Social Enterprises

136. The potential for social enterprises to provide employment opportunities, training and integration to Travellers was highlighted to the Committee repeatedly. Shuttle Knit is a Wicklow based social enterprise employing ten

Traveller women and two women from the settled community, making and selling handmade knitwear. As well as providing employment, Shuttle Knit also provides opportunities for training and skills development, as well as creating social inclusion opportunities, with Traveller women and volunteers from the settled community working together and interacting on a regular basis.

137. Dr Sheila Cannon, director of Shuttle Knit told the Committee in oral evidence on 10 December 2019 that social enterprise has been part of social policy in Europe since the early 1990s and has addressed issues of unemployment, in particular in areas where there are major barriers to employment such as multigenerational unemployment and marginalised groups that are discriminated against, including people who have been incarcerated or have experienced periods of homelessness.

138. GTM highlighted two social enterprises they have established since 2007: Bounce Back Recycling and First Class Insulation. They state that their social enterprise mission is to explore and expand new social enterprise opportunities in order to:

- increase employment opportunities for Traveller men and women.
- develop a powerful model of economic self-determination to inspire the wider community.
- reclaim the community's role in environmental and economic sustainability.
- promote the visibility of our work in order to challenge racism and discrimination.

139. Ms Joanna Corcoran of GTM told the Committee at its hearing of 4 May 2021 that *'[with the] social enterprise that we have going at present, there was no worry about putting in your CV to apply for that job because your name on it would not lead to someone making a decision not to bring that person in because that is a McDonagh from a certain area, who is bound to be a Traveller, and we do not want to hire that person. Even if they get past the CV and get into the interview - there is the fear of the discrimination that happens then, the racism, and not wanting to employ people'*.

Education and Training

140. Low levels of educational attainment in the Traveller community were raised as a key barrier to accessing employment. The need to link up members of the community with appropriate education and training courses was discussed. The issue of many Travellers not seeing a link between education and employment was raised. Reports of Travellers being sent on repeated training courses over years, with none leading on to employment was highlighted.
141. The historically poor education outcomes for Travellers over generations is highlighted by the Kerry Travellers Health Community Development Project (KTHCDP) submission as having a devastating impact on Travellers' ability to compete in the jobs market. KTHCDP also point out that Traveller young people do not see a direct link between education and employment, and Traveller young people are expected to contribute to family life at an earlier age. KTHCDP recommend that an apprenticeship style programme could be offered to younger Travellers from age 13 up, for three to four years.
142. The Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) 2017 report *A Social Portrait of Travellers in Ireland*²⁰ cites a statistical model designed to show how much factors such as education, gender, marital and family status, age group and region affect Traveller employment. The study found that when the impact of education age group, gender, marital status, presence of children and region, was accounted for, the employment gap between Travellers and non-Travellers dropped significantly, from being six times higher to 1.9 times higher. The fact that the difference remains so high suggests additional barriers to Travellers seeking employment.
143. The report also found that there is a sharp increase in the chance of a Traveller being in employment as their level of education increases changing from nine per cent for those with no second level education to:
- 15 per cent for those with lower second level.
 - 27 per cent for those with upper second level.

²⁰ A Social Portrait of Travellers in Ireland: Available [here](#)

- 57 per cent for those with further or higher education.

144. The Education and Training Boards Ireland (ETBI) submission reports that according to their Programme and Learner Support System (PLSS) figures, in 2019 there were 1,527 Further Education and Training (FET) learners who identified as Travellers. Of these, 43 per cent were men and 57 per cent were women. 59 percent were under 25 years of age. Approximately three-quarters (1,163) of Travellers reported that they had a lower secondary or primary education or below level attained prior to joining further education and training.

145. ETBI report that *The Review of Pathways to Participation in Apprenticeship* (SOLAS, 2018) - suggests that a very low number of ethnic and minority groups undertake apprenticeships and that a significant minority of the Irish apprentice population comes from lower socio-economic backgrounds. They recommend that national Census questions on disability and ethnicity should be incorporated into apprenticeship registration as a means of gathering more robust data on diverse participation.

146. The Kerry Travellers Health Community Development Project (KTHCDP) submission states that Current employment schemes rarely lead to a real employment opportunity, with individuals being sent on numerous courses over many years, none of which lead to employment when finished.

Labour Market Activation and Supports

147. The Department of Rural and Community Development (DRCD) has responsibility for the Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP), the Government's primary social inclusion intervention. SICAP supports disadvantaged communities and individuals including unemployed people, people living in deprived areas, people with disabilities, single parent families, people on a low income, members of the Traveller community and other disadvantaged groups. SICAP is overseen by the Local Community Development Committee (LCDC) in each local authority area and is delivered by the Local Development Companies (LDCs) in each area. SICAP offers two main types of support: support to Community Groups. During the period January 2018 – June 2020:

- 21 Local Development Companies (LDCs) recorded 32 actions where Travellers were named as the primary or secondary target group.
- 111 local community groups (LCGs) where Travellers were the primary or secondary target group received supports under SICAP.
- 1,318 Individuals who registered as Traveller received supports 37 progressed into employment (2.8%) 4 progressed into self-employment (0.3%).

148. The Department of Social Protection (DSP) state in their submission that they have worked with Traveller organisations to create Traveller and Roma led content to encourage engagement, including Traveller specific promotional videos and the organisation of a Traveller-specific Jobs Week 2020 event. Tailored supports are available for long-term unemployed and young jobseekers to prepare them for the world of work. Under this all unemployed jobseekers, including Traveller and Roma, engage in activation with an officer of the Department or a Jobpath Personal Advisor/LES Mediator.

149. The lack of specific targets for activating Travellers into the labour market was highlighted to the Committee at its hearing of 10 December 2019 by Ms Sinead Burke of the Saint Stephen's Green Trust (SSGT): *'There are no targets for Travellers in the public employment services. None of the agents of the State counts whether it engages Travellers or whether it is successful in moving Travellers into employment'*.

150. Ibec in their submission state that it is essential that there are positive action measures to ensure do not fall further from the labour market in the recovery. These could include access to paid work placements and targeted apprenticeships as well as increased access to employment schemes like CE and Tús. There could also be support given to promote entrepreneurship and self-employment.

151. Ibec also state that there should be engagement with individuals to examine the skills and attributes they already have and examining what opportunities exist for them – education training or placements leading to employment.

Public Sector Employment

152. The potential for public service employers to take a leadership role in Traveller employment was discussed by the Committee. Related issues include removing barriers in the application system, promoting public service careers for the Traveller Community, and work placement and internship schemes. The need for such schemes to include a route to permanent employment was highlighted by several witnesses. Mr Patrick O'Reilly of Pavee Point raised with the Committee at its hearing of 10 December 2019 that the Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty, which requires public bodies to take proactive steps to promote equality and human rights and prevent discrimination, could be an important means of driving greater equality in how our public services are designed and delivered.
153. The Department of Public Expenditure Reform (DPER) through the Civil Service HR Division, has policy responsibility for recruitment to the Irish Civil Service. The Public Appointments Service (PAS) is the principal recruiter for all civil service employers and undertakes recruitment for civil service competitions for all grades from Clerical Officer (entry level) to Principal Officer (Senior Manager). PAS engagement with Traveller groups identified the lack of expectation and belief among Travellers of gaining employment in the civil service, partially because of their historically low level of educational attainment.
154. Internships and work experience placements were raised by several witnesses and submissions as being a useful model to recruit individuals from underrepresented groups, particularly those who face barriers in traditional recruitment routes. DPER in their submission highlight the success of the Willing Able and Mentoring (WAM) Programme, which places graduates with a disability on a six-month mentored paid work programme in the civil service or private sector, and the Oireachtas Work Learning (OWL) Programme; applied learning, development and socialisation programme for adults with an intellectual disability facilitated by the Houses of the Oireachtas Service. There should be a review of access to internships employment options and employment panels, with actual opportunities for employment. This review should have discernible and transparent objectives.

155. The Department of Finance coordinated a Traveller Internship Programme in 2006/2007 with 20 Traveller woman and 3 Traveller men taking part in the programme across 12 Government Departments which ran for 6 months. However, at the end of the programme, there were no full-time positions available, and there is no data available to subsequently track whether or not participants benefited from securing longer term employment subsequently in either the civil/public service or the private sector.
156. The Department of Justice, with support of DPER and PAS has developed a one-year paid work experience internship programme for members of the Traveller community. Four placements at either Clerical Officer or Executive Officer are initially available, and participants will be mentored by a 'work buddy' and take part in a career clinic facilitated by PAS.
157. An Garda Síochána in their submission reported that the Commissioner has approved a paid internship programme for school leavers and graduates from minority communities. Three Traveller groups have been approached to assist in identifying potential participants.
158. It was highlighted repeatedly to the Committee that any internship or work experience schemes should not be an end in themselves but should be part of a pathway towards permanent employment. It is thus imperative that data must be collected on the outcomes of these schemes.
159. PAS have emphasised to their clients that only requirements which are essential to carry out a role should be specified in Job Specifications and it is critical that all public service employers consider potential equality and diversity implications when they are setting such requirements and do not create unnecessary barriers to employment.
160. The Saint Stephen's Green Trust (SSGT) submission on employment recommends that there should be a national action plan with clear targets to mainstream Traveller employment across all facets of the public service. Anne Costello of SSGT told the Committee in oral evidence that given there are approximately 400,000 people working in the public sector in Ireland, *'if even 0.1% of these employees were Travellers, we would have 400 Travellers working*

in the public sector. Of course, if the public service was truly representative of the population of Ireland, the number of Travellers employed in the public sector would be much higher. It is very disappointing to think that we have not even achieved this tiny percentage'.

161. The Open Doors Initiative submission stresses that local government should take the lead and proactively increase the percentage of people that it employs from marginalised communities, with quota targets moved on more quickly. The Kerry Travellers Health Community Development Project (KTHCDP) submission calls for affirmative action employment programmes to be implemented across the public service, to employ members of the Traveller community.
162. The GTM submission calls for Anti-racism and cultural awareness training to be mandatory for staff the departments and agencies with a remit in enterprise and work. Additionally, anti-racism and equality selection criteria and performance indicators should be included in job descriptions of staff. GTM also recommends that that a positive action programme should be a key policy for government, and explicitly stated in policies of the Public Appointments Service (PAS).

Disincentives in the Social Welfare System

163. Several submissions reported that many Travellers fear that taking up low paid or casual employment will lead to a loss of social welfare benefits (for example medical cards), leaving them in a worse position financially. They also fear that if they lose their employment, they will face difficulties accessing these benefits again.
164. The Clondalkin Travellers Development Group (CTDG) submission states that there is a real fear among many Travellers that entering employment will lead to a loss of benefits, medical cards for example, leaving them in a worse financial situation.

National Strategies and Policy Initiatives

165. The need for national employment strategies and policy initiatives to name Travellers as a key target group, and the failure of past strategies to do so, was

raised. Several submissions called for specific and measurable Traveller-related targets to be included in all such initiatives. The need for clear, disaggregated data on Traveller employment rates was also raised, with several calls for an ethnic identifier to be included on all public service administrative databases and forms.

166. The National Economic Recovery Plan makes only one mention of Travellers, committing to reserve places on employment services and training programmes for people from minority backgrounds of disadvantage, and consult with stakeholders from the Traveller (and/or Roma) community to advise the Public Employment Service in developing tailored support programmes. No specific number of places to be reserved or targets for the tailored support programmes are given.
167. The Clondalkin Travellers Development Group (CTDG) submission states that historically, Government policies and strategies on promoting employment have been weak or entirely lacking when it comes to the inclusion of Travellers. The Irish Traveller Movement submission states that specific measures under the *National Action Plan for Social Inclusion 2007-2016* were identified to tackle the Traveller high unemployment rates and there have been no Traveller-specific targets within the *Youth Guarantee* or the *Pathways to Work* strategies up to 2020. *The Pathways to Work 2021-2025* strategy mentions Travellers in two of its 83 commitments, but again, does not set specific, numerated targets for Traveller employment levels.
168. The Ibec submission states that the lack of focus on the Traveller Community in various Government strategies in the past like *Pathways to Work 2016-2020*; the *Action Plan for Jobless Households 2017*, the *Action Plan for Jobs 2018* and the *Future Jobs Ireland 2019* strategies has contributed to an erosion of trust and confidence in State systems among the Traveller community. Additionally, while The National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy 2017-2021 (NTRIS) has many excellent objectives and actions proposed, it has limited detail on timelines or ownership for objectives around employment.
169. GTM in their submission state that it is essential that the needs of key marginalised and minority ethnic groups, including Travellers, are assessed when

preparing all enterprise, employment and labour market programmes, to ensure that services are appropriate to their needs and experiences. Consultation with Travellers must be included at all stages of planning, and all strategies.

170. The Irish Traveller movement submission points out that there are 13 Actions towards Employment and the Traveller Economy within the National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy, but there is no executive lead within the Department where those actions are ring fenced for driving forward as apart on a specific DEASP strategy.
171. The Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP) 2018 – 2022 - aims to reduce poverty and promote social inclusion and equality in Ireland through supporting communities and individuals using community development approaches, engagement and collaboration. The Irish Traveller Movement submission reports that 52% of Travellers on the SICAP caseload in 2018 were placed on a course, but only 3% in 2018 progressed into employment.

Ethnic and Equality Data Collection

172. The Pavee Point submission on employment recommends that data systems used to monitor progress on strategies such as Pathways to Work should include an ethnic identifier to ensure specific outcomes for Travellers and Roma can be measured. GTM in their submission recommend the use of an ethnic identifier by all bodies working in employment support to produce disaggregated data on the numbers of Travellers accessing supports, programmes and initiatives. Any system of implementing an ethnic identifier should be in keeping with a human rights framework and include the voice of minority ethnic groups in the design, implementation and provision of training to its introduction.
173. The ESRI submission states that given the relatively small size of the Traveller population, there are few national data sources that contain enough cases to permit a comparison of the circumstances of Travellers and non-Travellers. As a result, the importance of maintaining a high rate of coverage and identification of the Traveller population in future Census rounds is crucial.
174. The Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU) submission recommends that all measures aimed at activating people in the labour market should include

monitoring, evaluation and learning frameworks which capture the impact on Travellers. Tools such as qualitative analysis and narrative enquiry can capture the voice and experiences of Travellers – particularly where numbers are small and will be invisible in quantitative analysis.

Chapter 4 - Accommodation

Recommendations on Accommodation

Recommendations on Accommodation

67. As Travellers form a totally disproportionate percentage of the families and persons in homelessness because they find it harder to get accommodation in the private rental sector it is vital that the measures to reduce homelessness in Housing for All be implemented without delay.
68. An urgent audit should take place of living conditions in all traveller specific and halting sites and immediate action taken to address deficiencies in accommodation, community facilities, public infrastructure, estate management etc. to be paid for out of an enhanced allocation for traveller specific housing in the estimate of the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage. These actions should include short term emergency measures to improve matters and long-term provision of high standard accommodation for all travellers.
69. The audit at 68. should include the mobile homes or caravans that are used as permanent dwellings. In the case of people/families wishing to remain living in caravans/mobile homes where they are deficient, they should be immediately replaced by new caravans/mobile through and expanded “loan scheme” or by direct supply by the relevant local authority. These should be funded out of the budget allocation for “traveller housing” and the quality of these caravans should be monitored in the short term by Cena to ensure they are of good quality. In the longer term this role should transfer to the National Traveller Accommodation Authority. The amount offered in the Caravan loan scheme should be monitored regularly to ensure that high-standard residential quality mobile homes can be afforded.
70. Where people would prefer more permanent type accommodation, such as a house or bungalow, on the same site this also should be accommodated.

71. Each TAP should be amended to reflect the result of this audit.
72. The audit should also reflect provision for expected new family formations and recognise the desire of many traveller families to retain their strong family connections.
73. The issue of the failure of many local authorities to get approval for Part 8 planning proposals must be addressed by the transfer of the decision making directly to An Bord Pleanála where local authorities are failing to implement their TAP due to refusal to pass Part 8 planning proposals or due to possible refusal having a chilling effect of the development of plans to provide adequate housing for the Travellers.
74. A National Traveller Accommodation Authority should be established to oversee the development and implementation of Traveller accommodation policy and to have an input into the TAP developed by each local authority. Where a local authority is failing in its duty to provide good accommodation for Travellers the Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage should have power to transfer responsibility for Traveller Specific Accommodation to the Traveller Accommodation Authority.
75. The inclusion of a Traveller Identifier on social housing application forms should be implemented as expeditiously as possible and without delay.
76. Social housing applications should record Traveller's first, second and third choice of accommodation types, to better determine future needs.
77. The method for determining the number of travellers in a local authority area should be standardised across all local authorities.
78. The 'local requirement' for social housing supports should be removed.
79. Research on the design of culturally appropriate accommodation for Travellers should be carried out without delay, and should take into account Traveller household sizes, cultural considerations such as animal keeping, and future proofing to allow for future generations to remain living in

proximity. Travellers must be engaged with and consulted throughout the process.

80. A network of transient sites should be established across the country without delay. Travellers should be consulted on their placement to ensure they align with Traveller nomadism patterns.

81. Cena should be funded to advise social housing landlords on the design, location and management of Traveller-specific accommodation projects.

82. Trespass legislation, in particular where it relates to publicly owned land, should be repealed until the network of transient sites is in place.

83. The ETHOS (European Typology on Homelessness) definition of homelessness should be adopted by all State bodies and Government departments, to better capture Travellers and others living in precarious accommodation or hidden homelessness.

84. Traveller specific accommodation funding, where not drawn down by local authorities, should be made available to Traveller groups and resident associations in traveller specific accommodation developments and halting sites for small capital works including estate management maintenance, minor repairs etc.

Conditions in Traveller Accommodation

175. The desperate living conditions on many halting sites was highlighted to the Committee by multiple witnesses, including the Ombudsman for Children (OCO), who met with the Committee to discuss his report *No End in Site*, focused on the conditions of one specific halting site.

176. *No End in Site* was initiated when Traveller Visibility Group and the local Traveller Women's Network contacted the OCO in 2018 about conditions at a local authority run halting site where 66 children and their families were living. Eleven families then came forward and made complaints about a persistent problem with a high rate of childhood illness caused by living conditions; a lack of

safe play areas for children; housing applications not being progressed; rodent infestation; inadequate sanitation; extreme overcrowding; safety concerns about access to the site; illegal dumping nearby; inconsistent and inadequate waste disposal; inadequate heating systems and unsafe electrical works. The OCO met with families and visited the site on three occasions.

177. The OCO found that there are approximately 140 people using toilets and washing facilities designed for 40, which has led to stress, tension and conflict. The OCO was told by HSE Director of Public Health Nursing that children living on the halting site suffer skin conditions and respiratory problems at a much higher rate than the general population. The Chief Fire Officer told the OCO that there are frequent calls to the site. The OCO were told by 17 children living on the site that they feel different to their peers due to the standard of conditions on the site.

178. The National Traveller Women's Forum (NTWF) submission states that a significant number of Traveller families have no footpaths, public lighting, fire hydrants or safe play areas. Almost 1 in 3 Traveller households living in mobile or temporary accommodation have no sewerage facilities and 1 in 5 have no piped water source.

Data on Traveller Homelessness and Housing Preferences

179. The lack of accurate data on the number of Traveller households in each form of accommodation, and on the preferences of Travellers regarding accommodation forms was highlighted as a serious issue by several witnesses.

180. Each year local authorities carry out an annual count or estimate of Traveller households and their accommodation form. The 2020 count indicated that there were 10,809 Traveller households in the State, 78 per cent of which were in standard accommodation, and 22 per cent of which are in Traveller-specific accommodation. Mr Paul Benson of the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage told the Committee that of the 78% in standard accommodation, 45% are either in local authority or approved housing body (AHB) tenancies in standard local authority or AHB-approved accommodation, 18% are in supported tenancies in the private rental sector, mostly through the

Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) and Rental Accommodation Scheme (RAS), with 9% in shared housing and 6% in accommodation provided by Travellers from their own resources. Of the 22% of households in Traveller-specific accommodation, the count estimates 8% are within group housing schemes, 9% on authorised halting sites and 5% on unauthorised halting sites.

181. Local Authorities' data suggests that the majority of Travellers have a preference for standard social housing, as opposed to Traveller specific accommodation options. The Committee heard from several Traveller organisations however that these figures may be misleading, with many Travellers expressing a preference for standard housing, as they fear no Traveller specific accommodation will be available.
182. In 2019, the Irish Traveller Movement (ITM) carried out an audit of all 31 current Traveller Accommodation Programmes (TAPs). This audit noted a lack of consistent approach across local authorities towards data collection and analysis and a lack of consistency on how current need and future growth are determined. A consistent approach to data collection on both current and future Traveller accommodation needs would allow for more accurate planning and provision of Traveller accommodation across the State.
183. The Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission (IHREC) in July 2021 published accounts of equality reviews into Traveller accommodation carried out with each of the 31 local authorities in the State. These equality reviews were started in June 2019, when IHREC invited each local authority to conduct an audit of the level of equality of opportunity and discrimination that exists in relation to members of the Traveller community who wish to avail of Traveller-specific accommodation. The equality reviews found evidence that the process for assessing the number of Travellers in a given local authority area varies between councils and that the process can be deficient in capturing accurate information.
184. The Ombudsman for Children's Office (OCO) report No End in Site also highlighted issues around the administration of social housing applications. When the OCO requested records on the social housing applications of eleven families, it took two and a half years for them to receive the files.

185. Multiple witnesses recommended to the Committee that an ethnic identifier should be introduced on social housing applications. This recommendation was also included in the Expert Review on Traveller Accommodation, which said that it would allow Traveller applicants for mainstream social housing to be identified, and progress in meeting their housing needs to be monitored.
186. Mr Paul Benson of the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage told the Committee at its hearing on 23 September 2021 that legally, it is not possible to include an ethnic identifier on the social housing support application form, but that a Traveller identifier will be included in an updated form this year. Mr Benson confirmed that there is a legal basis to include a Traveller identifier, as it is a requirement under the 1988 Act that local authorities identify and count the number of Travellers in their areas and those who need accommodation. The identifier will be completely voluntary and will allow the linking of people who identify as Travellers with their accommodation choices.

Traveller Accommodation Expert Review

187. In 2018, the then Minister of State for Housing and Urban Renewal Damien English TD, established an Expert Group to review the Traveller Accommodation Act, 1998 and other legislation that impacts the provision and delivery of accommodation for Travellers. The Traveller Accommodation Expert Group was composed of three members: David Joyce, Barrister, Mercy Resource Law Centre (Chair), Dr Conor Norton, Head of School of Transport Engineering, Environment and Planning, Technological University Dublin, and Professor Michelle Norris, Head of the School of Social Policy, Social Work and Social Justice, University College Dublin. Their final report was published in July 2019 and included 32 recommendations. Numerous witnesses and submissions to the Committee backed the immediate implementation of the recommendations of the Traveller Accommodation Expert Review.
188. The Minister of State with Responsibility for Local Government and Planning Peter Burke TD told the Committee at a joint hearing with the Committee on Housing, Local Government and Heritage on 12 October 2021 that he has established a programme board to oversee implementation of the expert group's

recommendations. Their programme of work for 2021 covers 18 of the 32 recommendations.

189. Mr Bernard Joyce of the Irish Traveller Movement told the Committee at a joint hearing with the Committee on Housing, Local Government and Heritage on 12 October 2021 that all 32 recommendations of the expert review group are important, but that in ITM's view, the three key recommendations are:

- The establishment of a national Traveller accommodation authority.
- The repeal of trespass legislation to end the criminalisation of nomadism.
- The circumvention of Part 8 of the planning process to remove a key barrier to delivery of accommodation projects.

190. Chief executives of local authorities retain their emergency powers. However, these are rarely if ever used in regard to addressing barriers in the delivering Traveller specific accommodation. This may further affirm a need for a National Traveller Accommodation Authority.

Culturally Appropriate Accommodation

191. The Committee heard that when accessing accommodation, Traveller face additional barriers due to specific cultural considerations, such as the average Traveller family unit being larger than that of the settled community, and the cultural significance of horse ownership. The Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission told the Committee that their equality reviews on Traveller accommodation show scant evidence of a full appreciation of the practical implications of cultural difference when providing services and engaging with the Traveller community. Aspects of Traveller culture, such as ethnicity, nomadism, use of caravans and horsemanship, are not adequately provided for in Traveller Accommodation Plans.

192. Mr Paul Benson of the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage told the Committee at its hearing on 23 September 2021 that research is being commissioned to consider the design and long-term maintenance of Traveller-specific accommodation. This will include wide stakeholder

consultation. One key area highlighted is the lack of amenity or play facilities on Traveller-specific accommodation sites.

193. Cena Culturally Appropriate Homes (Cena) is an approved housing body (AHB) which was established by Traveller and is Traveller-led. Cena operates with the belief that if the Traveller community is allowed to develop and implement. Cena has trained tenant liaison officers (TLOs) from the Traveller community, to work with the community to determine both their current needs and the needs of future generations.
194. Cena believes that culturally appropriate accommodation has never been properly defined. Mr Brian Dillon of Cena told the Committee at its hearing on 7 October 2021 that Cena is engaging with members of the Traveller community and working with architects to properly define what culturally appropriate accommodation for Travellers looks like. Mr Dillon told the Committee that he believes that Traveller appropriate housing must reflect the cultural importance of the keeping of animals, outdoor storage space, and the ability to store and access caravans to allow for nomadism. When Travellers are offered tenancies, they often have to sign an agreement that they will not keep animals or have any activity in the shed, which Mr Dillon stated was akin to signing away their culture.
195. Cena also highlighted the need for future planning in relation to Traveller accommodation. Mr Brian Dillon stated that when people get a home with Cena, a discussion is begun immediately about what will happen when their children reach adulthood, to attempt to head off the gradual overcrowding of many Traveller accommodation projects which contributes to poor conditions.

Homelessness Crisis

196. The Committee heard that Travellers are significantly more likely to be affected by the homelessness crisis in Ireland, with Travellers 22% more likely to become homeless. The issue of 'hidden homelessness' was also raised, with Travellers living in overcrowded accommodation, families doubling up in homes, and living on unauthorised sites on roadsides not being counted in homeless figures.

197. The homeless figures for the Traveller community are stark, especially given that Travellers account for less than one per cent of the Irish population. The 2018 report *Discrimination and Inequality in Housing in Ireland* published by IHREC and ESRI²¹ states that Travellers account for nine per cent of the homeless population. The Irish Traveller Movement reported to the Committee in oral evidence that, Travellers make up as much as 50 per cent of the number of homeless individuals in some counties. The National Traveller Women's Forum (NTWF) state that according to figures in their Traveller Accommodation Programmes, in 2019 there were 504 Travellers in emergency accommodation in Dublin city, approximately nine per cent of the total number of homeless families, while 23 per cent of homeless families in Kerry.
198. Several witnesses raised the issue of 'hidden homelessness' with the Committee, whereby the official figures do not reflect the true scale of the issue. Ms Rosemary Hennigan of Focus Ireland told the Committee at its hearing on 1 July 2021 that there is currently no means of measuring the extent of hidden homelessness in Ireland, including the number of people couch-surfing, in overcrowded accommodation, or experiencing housing scarcity in one form or another. Pavee Point in their submission state that 'sharing' of houses and halting site bays is used as a euphemism for Traveller families doubling or quadrupling up in overcrowded houses or mobile homes. Similarly, the term 'unauthorised site' refers to Travellers who are forced to reside on the side of the road due to a lack of access to either private rented accommodation, or social housing, be it standard housing or Traveller specific. Travellers living in these conditions are not counted in homelessness figures.
199. Mr Christopher McCann of the Free Legal Aid Centres (FLAC) told the Committee at its hearing on 22 July 2021 that Travellers living on 'unauthorised' roadside sites can face eviction without being given any form of notice, or being given 24 hours' notice, depending on the legislative mechanism used. Consequences for not following an order or direction to move on can include prosecution or the impoundment of the caravan. Travellers living on unauthorised

²¹ Available [here](#)

sites can face eviction even if there is no alternative accommodation available or provided to them.

200. Ms Bridget Kelly of the National Traveller Women's Forum (NTWF) told the Committee in oral evidence on 1 June 2021 that there is a lack of gendered analysis of homelessness, which means that women and children fleeing domestic violence are not categorised as homeless, nor are they integrated into strategies dealing with housing and homelessness.

201. The Travellers of North Cork (TNC) in their submission recommend that the State should adopt the ETHOS (European Typology on Homelessness) definition of homelessness. This definition provides a broader classification of homelessness, identifying four main categories:

- Rooflessness (without a shelter of any kind, sleeping rough).
- Houselessness (with a place to sleep, but temporary in institutions or a shelter).
- Living in insecure housing (threatened with severe exclusion due to insecure tenancies, eviction, domestic violence, etc.).
- Living in inadequate housing (in caravans on illegal campsites, in unfit housing, in extreme overcrowding).

202. Mr Mike Allen of Focus Ireland told the Committee in oral evidence on 1 July 2021 that to understand homelessness more deeply and how to solve it, we must broaden our definitions and understanding of homelessness and recommended the ETHOS definition as a way to do this.

203. Dr Niall Muldoon, Ombudsman for Children, suggested to the Committee at its hearing on 15 June 2021 that one factor contributing to overcrowding on halting sites and in Traveller accommodation is blockages or paralysis in the planning system. If a site has ten bays, it can end up with 20 or more caravans. Dr Muldoon says that the key is to get people moved into other accommodation, but when new projects are delayed or blocked, this can lead to even further overcrowding.

Private Rental Market

204. Rosemary Hennigan of Focus Ireland told the Committee at its hearing on 1 July 2021 that the vast majority of exits from homelessness, 82 per cent, are into the private rental market via the housing assistance payment (HAP) scheme. This raises several barriers for members of the Traveller community. Firstly, it is a challenge to find rental units suitable for larger households. Data from census 2016 show that Traveller households tend to be bigger than the general population, with one in four Traveller households having six or more persons, compared with less than one in 20 households in the State overall. Mr Wayne Stanley of The Simon Communities of Ireland told the Committee that in general, local authorities will not allocate a smaller property to a larger household, as the family would immediately have to be transferred to a priority list as an overcrowded household.
205. Secondly, it is particularly challenging for marginalised households with complex needs to find and maintain HAP tenancies in the absence of supports and interventions. The lower school completion and literacy rates among the Traveller community can cause difficulties in engaging with the complicated nature of sourcing a HAP tenancy.
206. Thirdly, the private rental market can be particularly hostile for Traveller households. The 2018 IHREC report *Discrimination and Inequality in Housing in Ireland*²² found that Travellers were 22 times more likely to report experiencing discrimination when seeking housing. Mr Wayne Stanley of The Simon Communities of Ireland told the Committee that a landlord's realisation that a household is from the Traveller community can see it being refused or overlooked for accommodation. Additionally, this discrimination can have a debilitating impact on the confidence of a household to engage with the private rental market, an inability to find a suitable tenancy can lead to families becoming trapped in emergency accommodation for long periods experiencing discrimination and racism.

²² Available [here](#)

Nomadism

207. The Committee recognises that nomadism is a deeply significant aspect of Traveller culture, and this point was made by numerous witnesses and submissions. The Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act 1998 gives statutory recognition to transient sites as one of a range of accommodation options for Traveller families. Despite this, there are currently no transient sites in any of the 31 local authority areas in the State, and no plans for the provision of transient sites in any local authority's TAP. This effectively removes any lawful enactment of traditional and cultural nomadism.
208. In addition to the lack of transient sites, the implementation of Part II A of the Criminal Justice (Public Order) Act, 1994 (as amended), containing Sections 19 (A) 19 (B) 19 (C) and 19 (D) ('Trespass Legislation'), has had a severe impact on members of the Traveller community who want to engage in nomadism. Ms Rose Marie Maughan of the Irish Traveller Movement told the Committee in oral evidence on 1 June 2021 that Travellers are punished and criminalised for being a nomadic people. She said that the criminalisation of Nomadism represents the State's policy going back to the 1963 Report of the Commission on Itinerancy, which set the tone for decades afterwards.
209. The Expert Review on Traveller Accommodation recommends that Trespass legislation should be repealed, in particular where it applies to public land, until an appropriate network of transient sites has been provided. This recommendation was backed by numerous witnesses and submissions.

Local Authority Provision and TAPs

210. Many witnesses were critical of Local Authority Traveller Accommodation Plans (TAPs), highlighting a range of issues such as a lack of standardised approach to data collection and analysis, a lack of planning for population growth, and a failure to draw down available funding from the Department of Housing, Local government and Heritage over many years.
211. Each Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee which has in its make up, a majority of officials, has no onus to take on board any actions beyond consultation. Effectively each LTACC can set its own standard and levels of

performance having only consulted with community members. In light of the hyper politicisation of Traveller Accommodation this continues to be problematic, further underlined by widespread under delivery.

212. The Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act, 1998 sets out that each local authority is to prepare, adopt and implement five-year Traveller Accommodation Programmes (TAPs).
213. In July 2020, the Irish Traveller Movement (ITM) published a Review of National Traveller Accommodation Programmes 2019-2024.
214. The Committee heard that investment in Traveller specific accommodation has dropped since the financial crash: the allocation in 2008 was €40 million, compared to €14.5 million in 2020. Funding declined from €120 million for the first Traveller accommodation programme from 2000 to 2004 to just €33 million for the latest TAP.
215. Several witnesses also raised concerns with the Committee about the continued underspend of Traveller accommodation budgets. ITM told the Committee that between 2008 and 2019, more than €72 million of funding was left unspent by local authorities.
216. In their equality reviews on Traveller accommodation, IHREC found evidence that underspend in Traveller accommodation budgets was being driven by both structural issues in how funding was allocated and drawn down, and also by a frequently deficient process for identifying actual and future housing needs.
217. Mr Paul Benson of the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage told the Committee at its hearing on 23 September that the funding allocation system for Traveller accommodation was overhauled in 2020, with the department ceasing to allocate specific budgets to individual local authorities. Instead, all local authorities can apply for and draw down funds at any time during the year. The Minister of State with responsibility for Local Government and Planning, Peter Burke TD told the Committee that local authorities made full use of the €14.5 million available for Traveller-specific accommodation in 2020 and it is hoped this will be repeated with the €15.5 million budget for 2021. Mr Bernard Joyce of the Irish Traveller Movement told the Committee however that of the

€14.5 million spent in 2020, €4.4 million was spent on basic emergency provisions to mitigate against Covid-19, such as water tanks and portaloos, and not on new housing developments.

218. Focus Ireland also highlighted that the legislative framework for access to housing and homelessness is based on a geographic link to a particular local authority, a 'local connection'. Once a person is added to a housing list with a particular local authority, it can be difficult to transfer to another. If a household becomes homeless and has an urgent accommodation need in a local authority area where a local connection cannot be demonstrated, the household may be refused emergency accommodation. If a household needs to move area for any reason, it may struggle to transfer to another local authority housing list and it risks losing its place on the original housing list. This can lead to particular difficulties for Travellers, given their nomadic cultural tradition.

219. The number of Travellers whose true preference was for standard housing was disputed by several witnesses. Ms Roslyn Molloy of the Housing Agency told the Committee at its hearing on 1 July 2021 that the Expert Group on Traveller Accommodation felt that there may be a view in certain areas that there is no chance of accessing Traveller-specific accommodation, leading Travellers to put standard social housing as their first preference, in the belief that they will be allocated housing sooner. Ms Molloy recommended, as did the Expert Group report, that the ability to express first, second and third preferences on accommodation type would potentially improve accommodation options, as well as providing a clearer picture of Travellers' true housing preferences.

Caravan Loan Scheme

220. The Minister of State with Responsibility for Local Government and Planning, Peter Burke TD, told the Committee at its hearing on 12 October 2021 that the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage has rolled out a six-month pilot preferential caravan loan scheme in four local authority areas. The scheme will allow participants to draw down up to €30,000. The Department hopes to roll out the scheme nationwide in 2022, following a review of the pilot. Minister Burke informed the Committee that one issue to be resolved.

221. Ms Emily Murtagh of The Irish Traveller Movement (ITM) told the Committee at the same hearing that the pilot scheme had positives, there are aspects which ITM has reservations about. Although the amount available of €30,000 is an improvement of the previous loan scheme which offered €5,000, ITM is concerned that it is still not sufficient to provide a high-standard residential quality mobile home.

Planning and Part 8

222. Several witnesses highlighted that Traveller accommodation projects are often blocked by Local Authority Councillors voting against them under Part 8 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001-2015. The discrepancy of Councillors voting to approve projects as part of TAPs and then voting to block them was raised. The Committee heard that proposals for Traveller specific accommodation developments can face public protests, and Councillors can face pressure or abuse for supporting them.

223. Mr Martin Collins of Pavee Point told the Committee at this hearing on 1 June 2021 that the issue of Traveller accommodation has become too heavily politicised at local authority level, with many local authorities not brave enough to even propose building Traveller accommodation. Ms RoseMarie Maughan of the Irish Traveller Movement (ITM) told the Committee that bypassing Part 8 planning would alleviate the issue and remove the pressure on and abuse of local representatives.

224. The Traveller Accommodation Expert Review found that elected members of local authorities have substantial control over the final approval of proposals for Traveller-specific accommodation. This control has, according to the Expert Review Report, been a significant contributor to delay and, ultimately, the failure to deliver Traveller-specific accommodation.

COVID-19

225. The poor living conditions experienced by many Travellers had additional detrimental consequences during the Covid-19 pandemic. Ms Bridget Kelly of the

National Traveller Women's Forum (NTWF) that living in overcrowded conditions prevented many Travellers from self-isolating when required to do so by public health guidelines. The lack of access to running water also made it difficult to comply with guidelines on hand hygiene.

226. Ms Rose Marie Maughan of The Irish Traveller Movement (ITM) told the Committee in oral evidence that It took Covid-19 for some families to get water and portable toilets as a temporary emergency measure.

Visits to Traveller Accommodation Sites

227. In November 2021, the Committee undertook a series of visits to Traveller accommodation sites around the country. These visits were undertaken to confirm reports of the conditions on Traveller accommodation sites, and to meet with the residents and hear first-hand their lived experiences and stories. The Committee visited the following sites:

- a. Dublin
 - i. Labre Park, Ballyfermot
 - ii. St Margaret's Park, Ballymun
- b. Cork
 - i. Spring Lane Halting Site
- c. Galway
 - i. Carrowbrown Temporary Site
 - ii. Carrowbrown Transient Site
 - iii. St Nicholas' Park, Doughiska
 - iv. Cuil Seoige, Tuam Road

228. The Committee noted several potential health and safety issues on several of the sites, including issues around fire safety, such as a lack of fire hoses on one site. The Committee found that their experience on site matched the conditions reported by the Ombudsman for Children's Office *No End in Site* report.

229. Overcrowding was an issue on every site visited, with one family of eight living in a single bedroom house. The Committee was also struck with an apparent lack of forward planning in Traveller accommodation to take into account growing families and new family unit creation.

230. The Committee was struck by the pride and passion displayed by the residents they met in maintaining and caring for their homes. On one site where a residents' association had taken control of site maintenance, the condition of the site witnessed by the Committee was markedly better. It is the Committee's belief that the problems regarding site upkeep lie not with the residents of the sites but with the local authorities charged with maintaining them.

Appendix 1 – Membership of the Joint Committee on Key Issues affecting the Traveller Community of the 32nd Dáil and 25th Seanad

Colm Brophy TD – Fine Gael
Joan Collins TD – Right to Change
Marcella Corcoran-Kennedy TD– Fine Gael
Martin Ferris TD -Sinn Féin
Gino Kenny TD – People Before Profit-Solidarity
Éamon Ó Cuív TD– Fianna Fáil
Fiona O’Loughlin TD– Fianna Fáil
Senator Ray Butler – Fine Gael
Senator Paudie Coffey – Fine Gael
Senator Collette Kelleher – Independent (Chairperson)
Senator Jennifer Murnane O’Connor – Fianna Fáil
Senator Lynn Ruane – Independent (Vice-Chairperson)
Senator Fintan Warfield – Sinn Féin

Appendix 2 Committee Hearings

Date	Topic	Witnesses
24/09/19	Health (Mental Health)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wexford Traveller Development Group • Traveller Mental Health Network • Irish Traveller Movement • Kerry Travellers Group • Pavee Point
08/10/19	Health (Mental Health)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Traveller Counselling Service • West Limerick Primary Health Care Project • Offaly Traveller Movement • Galway Traveller Movement • Exchange House Ireland National Traveller Services
15/10/19	Health (Mental Health)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minister of State with special responsibility for Mental Health, Jim Daly T.D.
22/10/19	Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pavee Point • National Traveller Women's Forum • Minceir Whiden • Kilmallock Traveller Women's Group • Traveller Primary Health Care Project • Department of Health
05/11/19	Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HSE • The Irish College of General Practitioners • The Traveller Visibility Group
12/11/19	Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Traveller Women's Forum • Tallaght Traveller Community Development Project • Dr Cindy Joyce • Ms Catherine Joyce
26/11/19	Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deputy Jan O'Sullivan • Marino Institute of Education • Trinity College Dublin PhD student, Mr. Patrick McDonagh

03/12/19	Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mr Joe McHugh T.D. Minister for Education • Department of Education and Skills • Higher Education Authority • National Adult Literacy Agency • Education and Training Boards Ireland • Aontas
10/12/19	Employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pavee Point • Mincéirs Whiden • St. Stephen's Green Trust • Involve • Travellers' Voice magazine • Shuttle Knit
17/12/19	Employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Irish Traveller Movement • Donegal Travellers Project • Galway Traveller Movement - First Class Insulation • Clondalkin Development Group • Kerry Traveller Development Group
20/04/21	Employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public Appointments Service • Economic and Social Research Institute • Open Doors Initiative
04/05/21	Employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • St. Stephen's Green Trust • Values Lab • Bounce Back Recycling, Galway
18/05/21	Employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ibec • ICTU • Travellers in Prison Initiative
01/06/21	Accommodation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Irish Traveller Movement (ITM) • the National Travellers Women's Network (NTWN) • Pavee Point Traveller and Roma Centre
15/06/21	Accommodation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ombudsman for Children
01/07/21	Accommodation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing Agency • Focus Ireland
22/07/21	Accommodation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Free Legal Advice Centres • Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission

23/09/21	Accommodation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage • County and City Management Association
07/10/21	Accommodation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cena • Simon Communities of Ireland
12/10/21	Accommodation [Joint meeting with the Joint Committee on Housing, Local Government and Heritage]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mr Peter Burke T.D., Minister of State with responsibility for Planning and Local Government • County and City Management Association • Irish Traveller Movement
21/10/21	Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Travellers in Prison initiative • Irish Penal Reform Trust • Irish Association for Social Inclusion Opportunities (IASIO) • Irish Prison Service • Probation Service • City of Dublin Education and Training Board (CDETb)
18/11/21	All topics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, Mr. Roderic O’Gorman, T.D. • The Department of Education

Appendix 3 – Submissions Received

Submission Received from:	Topic
Clanwilliam Institute	Health
Community Work Ireland	Health
Cork/Kerry Community Healthcare	Health
Mr Jim Daly T.D., Minister for Mental Health and Older People	Health
Department of Justice & Equality	Health
Drugs Policy and Social Inclusion Unit, Department of Health	Health
Exchange House Ireland National Travellers Service	Health
Galway Traveller Movement	Health
Senator Joan Freeman	Health
HSE	Health
Irish Penal Reform Trust	Health
Irish Traveller Movement	Health
Kerry Traveller Health Community Development Project	Health
Kilmallock Traveller Women's Group in partnership with Ballyhoura Development CLG	Health
Irish College of General Practitioners	Health
Institute of Public Health in Ireland	Health
Irish Prison Service	Health

Minceirs Whiden	Health
National Traveller Mental Health Network	Health
National Traveller Money Advice and Budgeting Service	Health
National Traveller Women's Forum	Health
Offaly Traveller Movement	Health
Pavee Point Traveller and Roma Centre	Health
Dr Brian Keogh, School of Nursing and Midwifery, Trinity College Dublin	Health
HSE South East Traveller Health Unit	Health
Southside Travellers Action Group	Health
Sports Ireland	Health
St. Stephen's Green Trust	Health
The Probation Service	Health
Traveller Counselling Service	Health
Traveller Visibility Group (TVG)	Health
Travellers in Prison Initiative	Health
Dr Sally Ann Lynch, Consultant in Clinical Genetics UCD School of Medicine	Health
West Limerick Primary Health Care Project for Travellers	Health
West Cork Travellers	Health
Westmeath Traveller Project	Health

Wexford Traveller Development Group	Health
Mr Oein DeBhairduin	Education
Mr Brian Harvey, Social Researcher	Education
Ms Jan O'Sullivan T.D	Education
Ms Kathleen O'Toole-Brennan, Trinity Access Programme in consultation with Ms Cathleen Joyce and Ms Annmarie Ni Choilean	Education
Aontas	Education
Department of Education	Education
Education and Training Boards Ireland (ETBI)	Education
Higher Education Authority	Education
Irish Traveller Movement	Education
National Traveller Women's Forum	Education
Mr Tomás Moriarty, Principal Our Lady of Lourdes NS, Bunclody, Co. Wexford	Education
Pavee Point Traveller and Roma Centre	Education
Tallaght Travellers Community Development Project	Education
Ms Kathleen Joyce, Student Trinity College Dublin	Education
Tusla	Education
Mr Felim O'Rourke, Economist	Employment
Clondalkin Traveller Development Group	Employment
Cork Equal and Sustainable Communities Alliance	Employment

Department of Education	Employment
Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment	Employment
Department of Justice	Employment
Department of Public Expenditure & Reform	Employment
Department of Rural and Community Development	Employment
Department of Social Protection	Employment
Donegal Travellers Project	Employment
Economic and Social Research Institute	Employment
Education and Training Boards Ireland	Employment
Enterprise Ireland	Employment
Galway Traveller Movement	Employment
Ibec	Employment
Involve	Employment
Irish Association for Social Inclusion Opportunities	Employment
Irish Congress of Trade Unions	Employment
Irish Traveller Movement	Employment
Kerry Traveller Development Group	Employment
Pavee Point Traveller and Roma Centre	Employment
Revenue Commissioners	Employment

Shuttle Knit	Employment
Southside Traveller Development Group	Employment
Public Appointments Service	Employment
SOLAS	Employment
St. Stephen's Green Trust	Employment
Association of Irish Local Government	Accommodation
Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth	Accommodation
Free Legal Advice Centres	Accommodation
Focus Ireland	Accommodation
Galway Traveller Movement	Accommodation
Housing Agency Independent Review Report by Professor Michelle Norris, UCD & RSM	Accommodation
Department of Housing, Planning & Local Government Independent Expert Group Report	Accommodation
Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission	Accommodation
Irish Traveller Movement	Accommodation
National Traveller Women's Forum	Accommodation
Pavee Point Traveller and Roma Centre	Accommodation
The Housing Agency	Accommodation
Travellers of North Cork	Accommodation

Appendix 4 – Committee Terms of Reference

*Order of the Dáil - Joint Committee on Key Issues affecting the Traveller Community*²³

That, notwithstanding anything in Standing Orders—

- 1) Dáil Éireann hereby appoints a Special Committee (hereinafter referred to as 'the Committee'), to be joined with a Special Committee to be appointed by Seanad Éireann, to form the Joint Committee on Key Issues affecting the Traveller Community;
- 2) the Joint Committee shall aim for consensus, based on human rights principles, on policy directions in respect of the following key issues affecting the Traveller Community—
 - a) physical health, mental health and suicide levels;
 - b) school completion rates and educational attainment, particularly at second and third-level compared to the settled population;
 - c) labour market participation, having regard to the unemployment rate of 80 per cent among Travellers; and
 - d) access to housing and accommodation, including Traveller-specific accommodation, in the context of the significantly higher homelessness rate among Travellers compared to the settled population;and shall report thereon to both Houses of the Oireachtas in accordance with paragraph (7);

²³ 21 September 2020

- 3) in carrying out its role under paragraph (2), the Joint Committee shall—
 - a) incorporate and complete the work initiated and carried out by the previous Joint Committee on Key Issues affecting the Traveller Community during the 32nd Dáil, which examined the key issues listed in paragraph (2), acknowledging their interconnectivity;
 - b) invite submissions and presentations from the Traveller Community;
 - c) examine current statutory, non-statutory and Departmental responses, including policy, resources and law;
 - d) research and identify models of good practice nationally and internationally;
 - e) establish parameters to gather relevant data; and
 - f) make recommendations, taking into account the views of the Traveller Community;
- 4) the Committee shall not exceed nine members of Dáil Éireann;
- 5) the Joint Committee shall elect one of its members to be Chairman;
- 6) the Joint Committee shall have the powers defined in Standing Order 96, other than paragraph (6); and
- 7) the Joint Committee shall make its final report to both Houses of the Oireachtas within six months of its first meeting in public and shall thereupon stand dissolved.²⁴

²⁴ The Dáil amended the Orders of Reference on 28 Apr 2021 and the Seanad amended on 30 Apr 2021 to extend the date to 30 July 2021.

The Orders of Reference were further amended by the deletion in paragraph (7) of '30th July 2021' and the substitution therefor of '30th November 2021'." by the Seanad on 12 July 2021 and the Dáil on 13 July 2021.

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