

Meath Interagency Strategy for the Traveller Community



Together Improve the Lives of Travellers (TILT)

Review and Strategic Priorities
2010-2013



comhairle chontae na mí
meath county council

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1. Introduction

'Together Improve the Lives of Travellers' (TILT) is the name of the Meath interagency Travellers Strategy, which was developed by the Meath Interagency Travellers Group (MITG), under the auspices of the Meath County Development Board (CDB). This report presents the outcomes of the evaluation of the first strategy from 2007 to 2009 and the identification of strategic priorities for 2010 to 2013.

1.1 Context

The initial Traveller Interagency Strategy in 2007 followed a national directive to all CDBs to identify how organisations, statutory and community voluntary sector could work more effectively together to respond to Traveller issues. A number of organisations in Meath worked intensively to identify issues and agree collaborative responses as part of the development of the first Traveller Interagency Strategy. These organisations included those that solely work with Travellers along with those with a broader remit.

Since then, extensive interagency work has taken place in Meath across a range of areas such as education, employment, accommodation, cultural awareness and health.

This review and plan builds on the commitment of organisations in Meath, to work collaboratively to respond to issues identified by Travellers, which affect their lives.

Three years on, all CDBs have been directed to review and prioritise key interagency strategies. This comes at a time of unprecedented economic crisis which is resulting in substantial reductions in public expenditure. In Meath, this is having a particularly significant impact. However, organisations across the county remain committed to working together to respond to quality of life, social inclusion and equality issues that affect the large numbers of Travellers who live there.

1.2 Review and Planning Process

In June 2008 an interim review of the initial Traveller Interagency Strategy was held. This was facilitated by an external facilitator, and the enablers and challenges to implementation were discussed. This led to a re-focussing of the initial strategy.

In April 2010, a full day facilitated session was held with organisations to review and prioritise future strategies. This was followed by a consultation process with Travellers to determine the key issues they encounter and to feedback to them the initial priorities identified by the organisations. The consultation with Travellers was led by organisations who work directly with Travellers in Meath. Following this, a half day facilitated session was held to finalise the plan. The plan was recommended by the Social Inclusion Measures group (SIM) of Meath County Council (MCC) and endorsed by the County Development Board (CDB) in June 2010.

1.3 Key Strategic Priorities

The key strategic priorities for TILT for 2010 to 2013 are as follows:

1. Supporting Traveller engagement, participation and empowerment
2. Promoting access to educational opportunities
3. Improving accommodation provision
4. Addressing barriers to employment and training
5. Establishing a high level interagency group
6. Promoting positive Traveller culture and identity
7. Responding to drug and alcohol misuse
8. Supporting Traveller men (particularly young Traveller men)
9. Promoting Traveller health.

These are developed in greater detail in section 5 of this report.

1.4 Format of the Report

This report is structured as follows:

- Section 2 provides a background to this review and planning exercise
- Section 3 presents a review of the 2007 strategy
- Section 4 outlines the impact of current reductions in public expenditure, and
- Section 5 sets out the strategic priorities and objectives for 2010 to 2013.

2. Background

This section considers the background context within which this review and strategic planning exercise took place. It presents a profile of the Traveller population in Meath.

Information in this section is grouped as follows:

- Population
- Location and accommodation
- Health and families
- Education and employment

The key issue of cuts in public expenditure impacting to the provision of services to Travellers in Meath is discussed in Section 4 of this report.

2.1 Population

Travellers have a long history of living in Meath. As with other areas in Ireland, it is difficult to ascertain accurate data in relation to the numbers and profile of Travellers. The main sources of information used are the 2006 census and the Meath County Council annual census count which is held in November each year.

The 2006 Census indicated that 715 Travellers lived in the county, representing 0.44% of the population. This is a small increase from 2002 (710 Travellers) and is broadly consistent, though just marginally below the national Traveller population which is 0.54% of the overall population.¹

The number of Travellers proportionally is higher than neighbouring counties as shown in the table below.²

Area	Total Population	Travellers	Travellers %
Ireland	4,172,013	22,369	0.54%
Meath	161,910	715	0.44%
Louth	110,659	419	0.38%
Monaghan	55,591	210	0.38%
Cavan	63,323	189	0.30%

Other figures of relevance are:

- The most recent Traveller Census, carried out by MCC in November 2009, highlighted that 251 Traveller families live in Meath.
- A recent report highlights that local agencies working with Travellers estimate the current Meath Traveller population at 850 people.³

¹ Hyland Anne, *Community Profile Travellers in Co Meath*

² *ibid*

³ *ibid*

2.2 Location and Accommodation

- While Travellers live across the county, a high concentration of Travellers live in Navan: 483 Travellers, which amounts to 68%⁴ of the county Traveller population.
- Other areas with Traveller populations in Meath include Trim (25 Travellers) and Dunboyne (18 Travellers). There are other small groupings of Travellers living in other areas across Meath.⁵
- Almost 60% of Travellers in Meath live in permanent accommodation, which is provided through group housing schemes, social housing and private rented accommodation.
- There has been a significant change in housing requests to MCC for Traveller housing, moving more towards group housing schemes.⁶
- In recent years, MCC have engaged in substantial dialogue with Travellers regarding housing design, location and size. St Patricks Park in Navan is one of the newest group housing schemes launched and there are plans to continue to develop consultation processes into the future as further housing is planned for the county in coming years.
- MCC through the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government has committed €3million until the end of 2011 to the provision of Traveller accommodation in Meath.

2.3 Health and Families

The health of Travellers nationally, indicates that while progress has been made, there are particular challenges to increase Traveller health outcomes in line with national averages.

In the 2006 Census, older Travellers (i.e. those aged 65 years and older) accounted for just 2.6% of the total Traveller population, compared with 11% for the general population. The percentage of Travellers over the age of 65 remains significantly at variance with national averages which raise questions regarding mortality rates within the Traveller community. The majority of the Travellers nationally are under 24 years of age, and the infant mortality rate (per 1,000) births is nearly 3 times the national average.⁷

Since the publication of the 'Meath Interagency Strategy for the Traveller Community 2007 – 2009', field research has been completed for the 'All Ireland Traveller Health Study' by UCD School of Public Health and Population Science on behalf of the Department of Health and Children and their Northern Ireland counterparts. This included consultation with Travellers in Meath. Further detailed health information will therefore be available following the publication and launch of this study, expected in September 2010.

2.4 Education and Employment

Travellers have amongst the lowest levels of education and employment nationally. There are many factors that have contributed to this, including: the traditional nomadic lifestyle, oral traditions, cultural acceptance of lower education levels and the approach to education provision. These factors are combined with the impact that social exclusion has on education participation. Literacy and numeracy levels amongst Travellers are in line with OECD statistics for developing third world countries. While more Travellers are now progressing from primary to post primary schools, retention

⁴ CSO Census 2006

⁵ *ibid*

⁶ MCC Traveller Census 2009

⁷ *Report and recommendations for a Traveller Education Strategy*, Government Publications

to Leaving Certificate is still extremely low. This is mirrored in Meath where 2.8% of Travellers had completed upper secondary education in 2006.

The 'Report and Recommendations for a Traveller Education Strategy' carried out in 2006 by the Advisory Committee on Traveller Education on behalf of the Department of Education and Science highlights the need for an inclusive, holistic approach to Traveller education in an intercultural manner. This report sets objectives for Traveller parents, early childhood education, primary post primary adult and further education and higher education.

Unemployment levels are exceptionally high amongst Travellers. Many traditional employment avenues have become obsolete over the past 50 years. A report compiled in 2008 outlined that only 13.8% of Travellers over 15 years of age are in employment, compared to the national average of 57.2% in employment.⁸ While, some Travellers successfully earn money through trading, the vast majority of Travellers nationally are dependent on social welfare. The economic boom, experienced in the earlier part of this decade, did little nationally to increase employment rates. This was due to a number of factors associated with low education levels such as illiteracy, low self esteem, lack of awareness of the skills required to retain employment, lack of structure, stigma/racism and benefit traps.

⁸ Peelo et al, *Positive Action for Traveller Employment*, 2008

3. Review of the 2007 Strategy

The Meath Traveller Interagency Strategy 2007 outlined the following key priority areas:

- Health and Accommodation
- Education - Youth and Childcare
- Justice and Equality
- Employment / Training and Enterprise
- Traveller Identity and Culture
- Consultation and Supports.

This section presents an overview of the outcomes for the objectives set in 2007. It focuses on the main achievements and challenges under each heading. It also assesses the functioning of the inter-agency group established to oversee the roll out of the strategy. An overall summary assessment is provided in the final part of this section.

3.1 Health and Accommodation

Responsibility for implementing the actions to progress the objectives set for health and accommodation lay with a representative task group. Three objectives were agreed and the assessment of each follows.

Objective		Assessment
No. 1	Develop and implement effective consultation mechanisms with the Traveller community in County Meath with regard to health and accommodation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There has been progress in increasing consultation with Travellers to influence service design and delivery. • The development of a consultation document is also a positive step. However, this document has not been finalised. It was agreed to put a model in place to act as the basis for future accommodation and health service plans and delivery across the county. <p>(continued overleaf)</p>

Objective		Assessment
No. 2	Develop and implement initiatives to improve the quality of life for Travellers living in Co Meath	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New housing provided by Meath County Council (MCC) in St Patricks Park represented a significant step forward. This site has a purpose built community facility which is currently being used as a small library. While this facility is only newly launched, it is being used by Travellers locally. Though this was a positive move forward, lessons have been learned, which will be transferred into the planned housing developments. • Travellers have requested changes to the housing requirements and these have been taken on board by MCC. • The HSE / Pavee Point 'Traveller Primary Health Care Initiative' plays an important role in health promotion by Travellers in Meath. This programme helps to ensure that Travellers have access to information and are supported to access health services/supports. The Travellers who participate in this programme develop core skills, and are now in some cases acting as leaders within their communities, providing a strong and vital link for Meath County Council Housing Section.
No. 3	Develop and implement initiatives to examine and address the issue of substance misuse and suicide within the Traveller community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A regional Traveller drugs and alcohol forum was established. • There is now a Traveller Representative on the Regional Drugs Task Force Board. This has increased inter agency working. • Greater linkages have been made with the Regional Drugs Task Force and HSE drugs outreach team. • This has led to specific information awareness, support and services being directed to Traveller families who are affected by drug misuse.

3.2 Education, Childcare and Youth Outcomes

Responsibility for implementing the actions to progress the objectives set under education, childcare and youth was taken by a representative task group. Four objectives were agreed and the assessment of each follows.

Objective		Assessment
No. 1	Identify, develop and implement appropriate available and sustainable childcare options for members of the Traveller Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key stakeholders worked together to oversee the completion of research into the barriers experienced by Travellers in accessing childcare. The report is titled 'Childcare Needs Analysis for Traveller Families in Co Meath'. • The opening of Navan Community Childcare Centre in Beechmount supported families to access community based childcare. • The Government's introduction of national supports such as Community Childcare Subvention (CCS) and the Early Childcare Education Scheme (ECCE) provided opportunities for Traveller families to access childcare by alleviating the financial barriers. • Navan Travellers Workshop (NTW) was supported to establish a community childcare centre. • NTW reviewed their afterschool provision.
No. 2	Develop supports and initiatives to encourage members of the Traveller community to avail of educational opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MCC library service ran a popular book gifting scheme, which targeted Traveller children to become more aware of books and to stock culturally appropriate books and educational tools. • An onsite library has recently been developed in St Patricks Park which is well used by the community. • Progress to address the financial barriers to education was slow.
No. 3	Promote and facilitate access to third level education, higher level education, adult education and lifelong learning for members of the Traveller Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A directory of services was completed. • A number of programmes such as literacy and horticulture targeted the Traveller participation.

Objective		Assessment
No. 4	Support young Travellers through the identification, development and implementation of appropriate initiatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A training and education needs analysis was completed. • Youth activities such as drama, summer camps and workshops provided important self development opportunities for young Travellers.

3.3 Justice and Equality

Responsibility for implementing the actions to progress the objectives set under Justice and Equality was taken by a representative task group. Two objectives were agreed and the assessment of each follows.

Objective		Assessment
No. 1	Promote awareness of issues relating to justice and equality amongst the Traveller community and within agencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A mobile information bus employing two Traveller women was established to provide information at various locations. Funding cutbacks have resulted in a reduced service. • Talks were held to inform Travellers of various national developments in relation to equality, e.g. the NCCRI 'National Action Plan against Racism'.
No. 2	Promote good relations between the law enforcement agencies and the Traveller Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Events such as football games between Gardai and Travellers were organised.

3.4 Employment, Training and Enterprise

Responsibility for implementing the actions to progress the objectives set under Employment, Training and Enterprise was taken by a representative task group. Two objectives were agreed and the assessment of each follows.

Objective		Assessment
No. 1	Improve employment opportunities for members of the Traveller Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meath Travellers Employment Initiative (MTEI) was established to provide one to one job coaching for Travellers in Meath. It has been very successful. • The recommendations from the evaluation of MTEI are important to inform the future direction of this initiative. • A pre-apprenticeship scheme did not progress despite keen interest particularly from young Traveller men due to reduced provision in this area from FAS.
No. 2	Improve community education opportunities for members of the Traveller Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (Linked to education – see section 3.2 above)

3.5 Traveller Identity and Culture

Responsibility for implementing the actions to progress the objectives set under Traveller Identity and Culture was taken by a representative task group. Two objectives were agreed and the assessment of each follows.

Objective		Assessment
No. 1	Examine the status of Traveller identity and culture among young Travellers in Meath and develop initiatives to encourage a sense of pride among the wider community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An exploration of youth culture was held by Navan Travellers Workshop with young Travellers. • Promotion of the Traveller CANT language amongst young people through workshops and the 'CANT is cool' camps. • The completion of a barrel top wagon has helped to inform and develop a sense of pride in Travellers across Meath. • The week long Traveller Festival in Navan with a range of events - art, drama, talks, exhibitions which was highly successful.
No. 2	Increase awareness within agencies of Traveller culture and the ways that this can affect service delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agencies participated in the week long festival and have become more aware of Traveller heritage and culture through events organised by NTW.

3.6 Consultation and Supports

Responsibility for implementing the actions to progress the objectives set under Consultation and Support was taken by a representative task group. Three objectives were agreed and the assessment of each follows.

Objective		Assessment
No. 1	Encourage members of the Traveller Community to liaise with agencies and participate in community and policy development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Progress to include Travellers in decision making has been weak. There is dependence on a small number of Travellers to represent all Traveller views / needs. This results in increasing pressure being placed on these individuals.
No. 2	Establish interagency support to ensure adequate responses to the needs of the Traveller Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Traveller Interagency Steering Group, which included Traveller representation, acted as a mechanism to highlight how agencies should respond to various needs and issues.
No. 3 (Data)	Compile and make available current and accurate baseline data and relevant documentation to inform policy development and implement appropriate programmes / initiatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No agreed activities took place to progress this action.

3.7 Structure to Oversee and Implement the Inter-Agency Strategy

A representative steering group was established to oversee the roll out of the strategy. It met on a quarterly basis. This group reported on progress to the 'Social Inclusion Measures' (SIM) group which in turn informed the County Development Board (CDB) of progress / blocks.

The interagency steering group established four issue groups:

- a) Health/Accommodation
- b) Education/Youth and Childcare
- c) Justice and Equality, and
- d) Employment/Training and Enterprise.

Each task group was lead by an agreed organisation. Meath County Council provided administrative and development support to the process. While the steering group worked well, issues emerged within some task groups regarding their role and the role of their lead agency. It is widely agreed that the structure was too unwieldy and not sufficiently embedded to manage without MCC support. It was also noted that opportunities to work across the strategic areas were limited.

3.8 Overall Analysis

Accommodation and Health

There has been ongoing progress to develop accommodation in partnership with Travellers in Meath. The draft consultation document, based on national guidelines, is near completion and provides an important tool to guide planning. Preferences for group housing have been noted by the Local Authority. There are plans and commitment to building further accommodation schemes in Meath. Challenges have been experienced and ongoing dialogue and collaborative working is required to ensure that accommodation provision is successful.

The Travellers Primary Healthcare Team in Meath provides a very important mechanism to support improvements in Traveller health. The recommendations from the All Ireland Traveller Health Study, which is expected in the coming months, will provide an important framework for the planning and delivery of health services in Meath.

Education, Childcare and Youth

A number of initiatives took place in Meath to support education, childcare and youth. However, significant challenges remain. The introduction of the CCS scheme in 2008 offers families an opportunity to access childcare in line with their income. In addition the recent establishment of the free ECCE preschool year has provided a major opportunity for Traveller children to access free preschool places to prepare children for transition to school. It is imperative that Travellers are aware of and access these opportunities. While progression to second level is improving, a number of barriers exist. Many Travellers, especially young men leave with no qualifications. Employment opportunities are poor for those that do progress. This is leading to apathy and disillusionment with the education system. Breaking cycles of educational disadvantage is a key challenge for education providers in Meath. Synergies between childcare, schools, adult education, youth and Travellers are a key priority.

Justice and Equality

Overall relations have continued to strengthen between Gardai and Travellers in Meath. This is as a result of more regular contact between Traveller leaders and the Gardai. However, a small number of Travellers can impact greatly on the rest of the community. Feuding is a concern, particularly the escalation of this across many counties. Increasing drug misuse is resulting in fear and tension within the community. The establishment of a high level group from the Gardai, Local Authority, HSE, Traveller representatives to respond to the crisis has been proposed.

Employment, Training and Enterprise

One of the key successes of the Meath Traveller Interagency Strategy has been the establishment of MTEI. It undertakes intensive work to provide supports to Travellers to facilitate their integration into paid employment. It is based on the model of supported employment for people with disabilities. FAS are considering mainstreaming the initiative and promoting it as a model for working with Travellers nationally. However, the current economic downturn is impacting on the work and future development MTEI.

Traveller Identity and Culture

NTW have led information, awareness and promotion of Traveller culture amongst Travellers and the settled community. It has a strong national profile in this regard. The need for Travellers to understand their background and culture is imperative to develop confidence and pride in their origins. Organisations with a broader remit who also work with Travellers need to develop a more open, flexible, inclusive way of working with Travellers. Ongoing dialogue, awareness raising and debate are required to ensure that Traveller culture is accepted as equal to settled culture. The development of Carnaross Heritage Park near Kells provides an exciting opportunity to progress work to promote Traveller culture.

Consultation and Supports

While agencies have developed relationships and a more open approach to Traveller participation, major gaps still exist. Partnering Travellers in responding to their needs is a complex task which requires: support to develop capacity, openness, cultural awareness, flexibility and open dialogue. The over dependence on a small number of Travellers is not sustainable in the long term and is not equitable.

4. Implications of Current Reductions in Public Expenditure

The key issue impacting on the provision of services to Travellers in Meath is the reduction in public expenditure. This has substantial implications for building on the work completed to date. Organisations in Meath involved in the development of this strategy are deeply committed to progressing this work. However, it may not be feasible to continue the priorities proposed in section 5 of this plan if budgetary reductions continue.

4.1 Impact of Cuts to Date

The implications of the current reductions in public expenditure are affecting services and supports to Travellers in County Meath. Meath experienced the second fastest growth rates (after Fingal which borders Meath) of 54.5%, based on population growth between the 1991 and 2006 CSO censuses. Meath's proximity to Dublin and available land for development accelerated this growth. While the population grew, services and supports struggled to respond to this rising demand, e.g. this county of a quarter of a million people does not have for example, a FAS training centre, a third level institute or a Local Employment Service. This has been consistently highlighted by the agencies involved in Meath County Development Board. While this has been a key concern for a number of years, the current economic downturn and reductions in public expenditure are compounding this problem.

A recent report commissioned by IMPACT compiled by Brian Harvey highlights that the current response to the economic crisis which focuses on cuts to public expenditure, has resulted in substantial reductions to the funding available to the voluntary and community sectors. This is in addition to the severe budgetary restrictions within the statutory services, alongside in many cases, recruitment embargos. Harvey outlines that the headline cut for voluntary organisations was between 18 - 20% over 2009- 2010.

4.2 Potential Impact of Ongoing Cuts

The indications are that budgets are set to decline further in 2011. This is at a time when demand for services is increasing. This poses huge challenges for statutory, voluntary and community organisations across Meath and has a particular impact on Travellers. The specific issues for Travellers include:

- a) Increasing numbers of people in Meath now require services as a result of the economic downturn. Travellers are now waiting along with increasing number of settled people for services. Many of the settled people are well educated, have previous work experience and are better placed to demand services.
- b) The service and support infrastructure in Meath is weak, and the budgetary reductions are weakening it further.
- c) Traveller specific services and supports have also had their resources reduced as part of the cuts to public expenditure.

As part of the process to review and agree the future strategic priorities, organisations consistently highlighted the impact that the current budgetary reductions have on their ability to provide basic supports and services. Their ability to commit to continuing the extensive work with Travellers in Meath is significantly affected.

The following issues were raised in this regard:

- Embargos on recruitment which have particularly impacted on statutory agencies such as the HSE, Meath County Council, VEC and FAS.
- Redeployment of staff and changing roles impacts on service provision, e.g. HSE loss of 2 days nursing input to the Primary Travellers Health Care initiative, HSE drugs outreach now becoming more centralised.
- The Navan Travellers Training Centre will have reduced places available from September 2010, therefore unable to meet the demand for places.
- Directed mergers such as the Community Development Project element of Navan Travellers Workshop with Meath Partnership which is proposed to be completed by the end of 2010.
- In addition, budgetary reductions have impacted severely on staffing levels in NTW. The Heritage Officer cannot be replaced, 1 Information Officer is no longer employed and a second is on reduced hours due to budgetary reductions.
- Difficulties with meeting demands prior to the cuts, makes it difficult to absorb cuts through internal measures
- Budgetary reductions in line with national averages of 10% in 2010 are experienced by organisations across Meath working with Travellers. This is in addition to similar reductions in 2009.

5. Strategic Priorities and Objectives: 2010-2013

The following nine strategic priorities are agreed by organisations across Meath as the Traveller interagency strategic priorities for the next three years:

1. Supporting Traveller engagement, participation and empowerment
2. Promoting access to educational opportunities.
3. Improving accommodation provision
4. Addressing barriers to employment and training
5. Establishing a high level interagency group
6. Promoting positive Traveller culture and identity
7. Responding to drug and alcohol misuse
8. Supporting Traveller men (particularly young Traveller men)
9. Promoting Traveller health.

Each priority is considered in terms of:

- Goal, i.e. the overarching priority to be achieved
- Rationale
- Objectives
- Agencies involved
- Expected outcomes.

The section concludes with considerations relating to implementation and monitoring of the strategic priorities.

It was agreed that Strategic Priority 1 is the key priority to implement. This involves focussing on building ownership and empowerment.

5.1 Supporting Traveller Engagement, Participation and Empowerment

Goal	To fully empowered Travellers across Meath to participate in decision making and work equally with organisations to respond to the challenges they experience.
Rationale	<p>The need for Travellers across Meath to be fully empowered to participate in decisions that affect their lives was a recurrent theme in the review and planning process. The barriers and challenges are known and understood, however unless substantial work is undertaken to redress this balance, Travellers in Meath will continue to access services which are more appropriate to the settled community. Travellers need to play an active role with organisations to develop culturally appropriate needs based responses.</p> <p>Supporting the empowerment of Travellers across Meath is a principle that runs across all strategic priorities.</p> <p>Ownership of the plan is required by Travellers and organisations across Meath.</p>
Objectives	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To establish a representative Traveller Forum, which will be recognised by all organisations as the basis for Traveller consultation and representation.
Agencies involved	It is proposed that NTW will lead this initiative in conjunction with agencies which include Navan Travellers Training Centre, Meath Partnership and MCC.
Expected Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased participation by Travellers in decision making processes. • More meaningful consultation, dialogue and partnership with Travellers. • The use and promotion of more appropriate methods of engaging with Travellers across Meath.
Timeline	The plan to establish the forum will be completed and agreed by the end of 2010. The forum will be established in 2011.

5.2 Promoting Access to Educational Opportunities

Goal	To increase the education levels of Travellers across county Meath.
Rationale	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In line with national trends, the education levels of Travellers across Meath are significantly lower than the national population base. • International research, backed up by national research, emphasises the importance of early childhood learning. The needs of the research carried out to identify the childcare needs of Travellers should be used to inform childcare strategies locally. In addition existing opportunities to access childcare and early education need to be fully available and promoted amongst Traveller families. • While progress has been made to increase levels of Travellers attending second level and completing junior and senior level cycles, substantial challenges still exist. • Literacy is a major issue for many parents and older people. Low literacy levels impacts on their ability to support children to complete homework and stay in school. • Traveller culture places greater emphasis on young women completing school than in relation to young men. Many young Traveller men leave school with no qualifications. • It is extremely difficult for the small number of Travellers who have completed second and third level education to access employment. This is due to the current economic crisis and also perceived discrimination by employers who now have substantial choice when making recruitment decisions. This is a major challenge for educators and Travellers who recognise that education is a key way to break cycles of poverty and exclusion. The goal of promoting participation is more challenging at this time than in other times.
Objectives	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To ensure that Traveller families are aware of and accessing the ECCE free pre-school year as a way to prepare and support the transition for Traveller children to primary school. 2. To ensure that childcare provision takes an intercultural approach to childcare, taking account of Traveller culture alongside other cultures. This will support Traveller children to prepare for the transition to school. 3. To ensure that Traveller childcare is based on agreed national framework standards such as Siolta and Aistear. 4. To develop and enhance a Traveller range of family literacy programmes. 5. To provide a range of second chance education initiatives, delivered in a culturally appropriate way, with a particular focus on targeting young men. 6. To continue to develop programmes to support retention in second level such as the 'Bridge Project'. 7. To support the ongoing development of afterschool programmes such as those in St. Patricks Park

Promoting access to educational opportunities – continued

<p>Agencies involved</p>	<p>Meath VEC will play a key role in working with other relevant organisations such as Meath County Childcare Committee, NTW, Navan Travellers Training Centre, Meath Partnership, HSE- drugs outreach worker, Regional Drugs Task Force, Meath Youth Service and others to progress actions to fulfil these objectives.</p>
<p>Expected Outcomes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participation of Traveller children in ECCE in line with national mainstream averages. • Pre-school providers to fully prepare Travellers for their progression to primary school. • High quality childcare based on recommended best practice. • Increased literacy levels amongst Travellers. • A range of second chance education initiatives available for Travellers across Meath. • Educational opportunities targeting Travellers who formerly used drugs.

5.3 Improving Accommodation Provision

Goal	To work with Travellers across Meath to provide high quality, well maintained accommodation that fits their requirements and to develop a sense of ownership and responsibility by Travellers for their housing.
Rationale	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are currently 68 Traveller families who require accommodation across Meath. • National issues affect transition into housing such as increased rent when Travellers move from private rented accommodation (when in receipt of rent supplement) into local authority housing. • Significant work has taken place to work with Travellers in the provision and maintenance of accommodation across Meath. It is acknowledged that this needs to be built on and developed further.
Objectives	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To complete the draft consultation policy document, in line with national consultation documents. 2. To use this document as the guideline to base work to develop accommodation across Meath. 3. To inform Travellers of the completed consultation policy document. 4. To continue plans to respond to Traveller accommodation needs across Meath (including re-furbishment). 5. To support Travellers to take ownership of their accommodation and become less reliant on local authority support/services. 6. To consider and respond to the needs of homeless Travellers.
Agencies involved	Meath County Council, housing section will lead on initiatives in relation to accommodation. It will work closely with other organisations such as Respond, Navan Travellers Training Centre, HSE and NTW.
Expected Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High quality accommodation that fits with Traveller requirements. • Traveller pride in their accommodation along with a sense of ownership and responsibility.

5.4 Addressing Barriers to Employment and Training

Goal	To develop tailored supports and services to maximise Travellers potential to progress into employment.
Rationale	Traveller employment rates are significantly lower than rates for settled people. There are opportunities to build on work to date to increase skills levels and provide intensive supports to prepare for employment. However, substantial barriers to progression exist, such as the current benefits trap, qualification levels and the current high rates of unemployment.
Objectives	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Secure MTEI as a sustainable mainstream funded initiative in Meath within the national FAS Supported Employment Programme. 2. Implement the recommendations from the MTEI evaluation. 3. Develop training programmes targeting Traveller young people, particularly young men. 4. Ensure that Travellers are aware of and supported to access financial supports to assist with third level education costs. 5. Ensure that Travellers are aware of other incentives to increase employability e.g. jobseekers voluntary work option, work placement programme etc. 6. Develop stronger relationships with local employers to match employer requirements and break down barriers. 7. Develop strategies to promote and support increased self employment amongst Travellers. 8. Highlight the issue of welfare traps nationally and contribute to the solutions to address this issue.
Agencies involved	NTW, MCC, Meath Partnership, FAS, VEC, DSP, HSE, trade unions and the business sector (through Navan Chamber of Commerce and other business representative groups).
Expected Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mainstream MTEI with the aid of FAS funding as a national Supported Employment Programme. • Implementation of the recommendations from the evaluation of MTEI. • Greater opportunities for young people to access training programmes that are linked to local employment opportunities. • Greater numbers of Travellers being supported to become self employed. • Creative solutions to address welfare traps. • Greater awareness in the local business community of the skills and capabilities of Travellers.

5.5 High Level Interagency Group

Goal	To have immediate and effective responses to crisis situations that effect Traveller communities.
Rationale	Learning from other counties highlights the need for a rapid response if crisis situations emerge. These can be as a result of complex family circumstances, anti social behaviour, criminal activity, violence, feuding or drug related crime. Decision makers working together in a timely manner can help to alleviate the impact of such situations on the broader community.
Objectives	1. To establish a high level interagency response to crisis situations.
Actions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Research /learn from responses in other counties. 2. Working with key Traveller leaders, agree a definition of a crisis and a plan to respond should such a crisis emerge. 3. Agreement from senior managers to commit to and participate in plans to respond to emergency situations.
Agencies involved	MCC, Gardai, HSE, NTW, key Traveller leaders.
Expected Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effective mechanisms to respond to crisis incidents
Timeline	September 2010

5.6 Promoting Positive Traveller Culture and Identity

Goal	To continue to highlight Traveller culture amongst the Travelling community, the settled community and organisations in Meath.
Rationale	Meath has undertaken significant work to educate and promote Traveller culture. This is important to continue as the events organised since 2007 have played an important role in increasing Traveller confidence and challenging stereotypes. It has also enhanced respect for the Travelling community in Meath.
Objectives	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To create opportunities for Travellers to revisit their heritage. 2. To create opportunities for Travellers to inform and educate broader society about Traveller culture and identity.
Agencies involved	NTW will lead this initiative, in conjunction with Meath Primary Healthcare Project, Navan Traveller Education Centre, National Association of Traveller Centres (NATC) MCC, Meath Partnership and the VEC.
Expected Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Restore pride amongst Travellers in the culture and traditions. • Greater confidence amongst Travellers in being a Traveller. • Preserve Traveller skills and traditions that are at high risk of becoming extinct. • Education of the broader community about Traveller culture. • Breakdown of stereotypes and prejudice experienced by Travellers. • Carnaross Heritage Park to open, providing an important mechanism to promote Traveller culture.

5.7 Responding to Drug and Alcohol Misuse

Goal	To work collaboratively to provide information, support, services and aftercare to Travellers and their families at risk of or misusing drugs.
Rationale	Escalating drug misuse amongst Travellers nationally is having a severe impact on their communities and the community at large. There are a range of cultural issues which inhibit access to services and supports. Work in Meath to engage and work positively with Travellers at risk of or using drugs has been largely positive. It is critically important to continue this work.
Objectives	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Promote an outreach approach to engage with drug mis users and their families. 2. Finalise interagency protocols which will assist clients to access appropriate services. 3. Provide appropriate information, advice, community based training and services to drug mis users and their families. 4. Challenge alcohol misuse and its acceptance within Traveller communities. 5. Increase representation of Travellers on the Regional Drugs Task Force (RDTF) and continue to develop the RDTF drug and alcohol forum. 6. To develop aftercare educational opportunities for former drug users who have progressed through the rehabilitation continuum, to further their education. 7. To address issues that block participation on methadone maintenance programmes particularly for Travellers who are homeless.
Agencies involved	RDTF, HSE, NTW
Expected Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased awareness of the impact of drugs and alcohol. • Increased awareness and usage of the services available. • More co-ordinated approach to service delivery. • Additional services in place to respond to identified needs. • Representation of Traveller issues on the RDTF drug and alcohol forum.

5.8 Supporting Traveller Men (Particularly Young Traveller Men)

Goal	To increase the numbers of Traveller men (particularly young Traveller men) engaged in education, training, employment and developmental activities.
Rationale	The disengagement of young Traveller men in Meath is a key concern. They are a high risk group and lack of engagement can result in depression, suicide, drug misuse, crime and general apathy. Supporting young men to reach their full potential is agreed as a core priority within this strategy.
Objectives	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Increase the numbers of young Traveller men completing second level education. 2. Increase the numbers of Traveller men participating in accredited training. 3. Increase the numbers of Traveller men gaining employment or becoming self employed. 4. Reduce the numbers of young Traveller men becoming involved in crime.
Actions	To be agreed.
Agencies involved	VEC, NTW and other agencies.
Expected Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increasing numbers of young Traveller men, fully engaged in training, education or employment. • Maximising the skills and potential of greater numbers of Traveller men. • Identification of positive male role models from within the Meath Traveller population.

5.9 Traveller Health

Goal	To implement the recommendations of the All Ireland Traveller Health Study.
Rationale	The All Ireland Health Study, which is due for publication later this year, will recommend strategies in relation to a range of health outcomes including, mental health, alcohol and drugs, nutrition. It is important that Meath continues to build on its work with Travellers to promote positive health and wellbeing.
Objectives	1. Consider and use the findings of the All Ireland Traveller Health Study as the basis for the Traveller health actions in Co. Meath.
Agencies involved	HSE in conjunction with NTW, MCC and Travellers.
Expected Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved health outcomes amongst Travellers in Meath.

5.10 Implementation and Monitoring

It is proposed that MITG will continue to play its role to oversee the implementation and monitor progress. It will report to SIM which in turn will report to the CDB.

The steering group will finalise its implementation process and structure in Autumn 2010, to take account of the lessons learnt from the last strategy and to adjust to meet new priorities. Lead and support agencies to implement the objectives will be agreed at this time. There is a commitment from the organisations in Meath to more review and adjustment of the strategy more regularly in order to take on board key national policies, changes to the economy and opportunities that emerge to progress the work.

Appendix 1: Stakeholder Consultation

The following is a list of those involved in the review and planning consultation process

Michael McDonagh	Manager, NTW
Eileen Gilsean	Coordinator Primary Healthcare Project, HSE
Bernie McKeivitt	Adult Literacy Officer, VEC
Joe Fahy	Senior Engineer, Meath County Council, Housing
Louise Clinton	Social Worker, Meath County Council Housing
Margaret Deegan	Manager, Navan Traveller Training Centre
Antoinette Brady	Visiting Teacher Service , Dept of Education & Skills
Ciaran Mangan	County Librarian, Meath County Council
Shauna Henry	Executive Librarian, Meath County Council
Daphne Van Baten	FAS Community Employment Supervisor, NTW
Owen McCarthy	POBAL
Brigid Collins	Community Development Worker, Primary Healthcare - HSE
Juliann Joyce	Community Development Worker, Primary Healthcare - HSE
Leisa Colligan	Employment Facilitator, Meath Traveller Employment Initiative
Nathanya McDonagh	Community Development Worker, Primary Healthcare - HSE
Catherine McGlone	Family Support, HSE
Colette O'Connor	Addiction Outreach Service, HSE
Robert McCulloch	Meath Partnership
Sheila Comiskey	Coordinator, Jobmatters
Andy Ogle	Coordinator, NE Regional Drugs Task Force
Anne Hyland	Navan Travellers Workshop
Maureen Higgins	SI Officer, Meath County Childcare Committee
Leisa Colligan	Employment Facilitator, MTEI
Mary Murtagh	Meath Citizens Information
Ned Brennan	RESPOND
Joe Fahy	Senior Engineer, Meath County Council
Paul Dolan	Department of Education & Skills
Mary Murtagh	Meath Citizens Information
Louise Levins	Meath PHC NTW Ltd
Siobhan O'Connor	Meath County Council
Mary Joyce	Meath Primary Healthcare
Maureen McKinley	Meath County Council
Assumpta Kelly	Meath County Council
Rosemary Corr	Meath County Council
Michael Killeen	Meath County Council
Larry Whelan	Meath County Council
Insp. Martin Smethers	Garda Siochana
Susan Bookle	Burtenshaw Kenny Associates (Process Facilitator)

Appendix 2: Previous Stakeholder Consultation

The following agencies were engaged in preparation of the Traveller Interagency Strategy, 2007:

Aisling Group/ Bradán Foundation
An Garda Síochana
Co. Meath VEC – Adult Literacy Dept.
Department of Education & Science
Department of Social & Family Affairs
FÁS
HSE – Child Care Services: Child Care Manager
HSE – Child Care Services: Service Development Officer
HSE – Family Support Services: Principal Social Worker
HSE – Family Support Services: Family Support & Child Welfare Manager
HSE – Meath Primary Healthcare Project
HSE – Meath Primary Healthcare Project
Meath Citizens Information Service
Meath County Childcare Committee
Meath County Council – Community & Enterprise
Meath County Council – Housing
Meath County Enterprise Board
Meath Library Service
Meath Partnership
Meath Youth Federation
Navan Travellers’ Training Centre
Navan Travellers’ Workshop Ltd.
Peoples Resource Centre
Probation Service – Navan Team
RAPID – Meath County Council
Respond - Housing Association
Trim Family Resource Centre