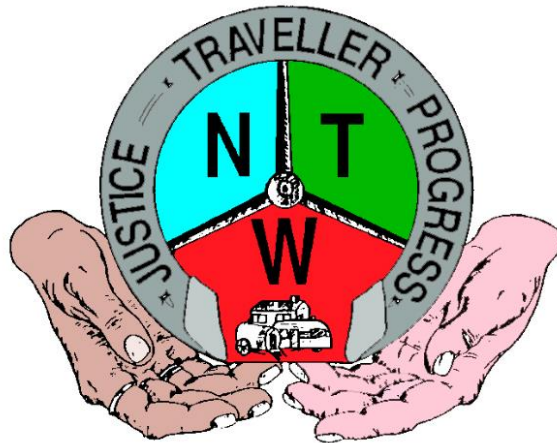


Traveller Prison Links Programme Pilot Project 2014-2015

Year one – May 2014 – June 2015



Meath Travellers Workshops

**Working in conjunction with
Wheatfield Place of Detention**

Programme funded by *st stephen's green trust*

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The Prison Links programme is a three year pilot programme working with Traveller prisoners in Wheatfield Place of Detention.

The main aims of the programme are to encourage:

- Travellers to avail of the training and education programmes available in Wheatfield
- To instil pride and understanding of their Traveller heritage and culture
- To deliver cultural training to Prison staff and management

This project will be deemed a success if:

- More Travellers engage in the education and training programmes
- Prisoners and staff have a better understanding of Traveller culture and identity
- Ultimately, the level of re offending of Traveller prisoners begins to fall.

Project Background

For the last number of years, as part of Meath Travellers Workshops Ltd programme of activities, we have had an action called “Prison Links”. This action is where we link in with Traveller prisoners to give them help and support during their time in prison. In the process of carrying out these support visits, we became very aware that very few Travellers were mean fully engaging with the education programmes available to them within the prison system. It became apparent that the same barriers which prevent Travellers participating in education outside of prison also exist and are heightened within the prison, such as:

- Poor self image
- Lack of confidence
- A sense of inferiority
- Lack of ambition
- Isolation

We were contacted by prisoners asking for help and support, with a view to overcome some of the obstacles that exist for Travellers in participating in self improvement activities. We felt that with this request coming from both Traveller and non-Traveller inmates, it was a strong base for us to work from.

From discussions with prison officers there was a clear identified need for in service training around the history and identity of Travellers and a cultural awareness programme to be delivered to prison and educational staff.

Project Need

Travellers are over represented proportionally in prisons. Travellers constitute approximately 0.9% of the population of the country, and with the limited amount of research on the number of Travellers in Prison, it is clear that they constitute a much higher percentage of the prison population, than would be expected from 0.9% of the overall population of the country.

In preparation for this application, Meath Travellers Workshops held meetings with the education co-ordinator for the Prison Service, the training and development officer for

Wheatfield (Gate Project), teaching staff from Wheatfield Education service, the Integrated Systems Manager and the Governors' office in Wheatfield.

We discussed this proposed programme with the Midlands Traveller Mediation Service. We also linked in with the Irish Chaplaincy Service in the UK who kindly sent us culturally appropriate reading materials they had developed with members of the Irish Traveller prisoner population. These readers formed the template of us developing our own readers with Wheatfield prisoners in April 2015.

This project is new and innovative, but was developed and influenced by our previous Prison Links action. Our programme widens the scope of our previous work and draws directly on our experience to date. Though this new initiative is ground breaking work with Travellers in the Prison Service, it is the next logical step in supporting Travellers in prison and prison staff.

All Ireland Travellers Health Study 2010

This study confirms that Travellers are over-represented in prison compared to the non-Traveller population, and according to Traveller families' responses to the AITHS census, Travellers comprised 4.6% of the prison population during the census as compared to 0.9% of the ROI population. The risk of a Traveller man being imprisoned was at least 5 times higher than that of a non-Traveller man, and the risk for a Traveller woman was 18 times that of a non-Traveller woman.

Project Details

1. In-service Training for Prison management, staff and services.

With the permission of the Governor, teachers, addiction counsellors, probation services, psychology and chaplaincy services have taken part in two cultural training sessions so far, with two more scheduled in June 2015. These sessions took place over approximately two x 2 hr sessions. A pre-session questionnaire was distributed (anonymous, tick boxes) and then a fresh questionnaire was distributed after the sessions to assess the workshops impact. Approx. 3 month's later further feedback was taken to ascertain the changes in behaviour and attitude since taking part in the Programme.

Content of the sessions includes:

- Perceptions of who Travellers are
- Clarifying the common myths around the history of Travellers
- Who are today's Travellers?
- Examining the current relationship between Travellers and non Travellers and why this is so
- Examining the current relationship between Traveller extended families and why this is so
- The future – celebrating and utilising cultural diversity to everyone's benefit

Many in this group considered themselves "non-judgemental" and as such treated everyone the same.

The challenge for the facilitators was to explain that the same is not equal. (Appendix 1)

Please see our observations for these sessions in Appendix 1 Staff Management and Training Sessions.

2. Traveller Prisoners

The programme was advertised throughout the prison by asking trusted prisoners to spread the word, especially through the Red Cross programme, ISM Keary and ISM Pat Murphy also informed potential prisoners and posters were put on display throughout the landings. .

There are several objectives which are being achieved through regular sessions with groups and individuals.

- Bring about better understanding of the benefits of positively engaging with the education system.
- Help improve the confidence and low self image of Irish Travellers in prisons.
- Cultural awareness for Travellers themselves, having a better knowledge and understanding of their own history and identity
- Understanding how to recognise the continuous bombardment of negativity about Traveller identity and culture and respond in a constructive and positive way.

In September we started these sessions in earnest working with Travellers who were part of the main prison population. As we gained a better knowledge of how Wheatfield worked and the other types of prisoners that were serving sentences there, it was suggested that we run two shorter programmes after Christmas with the “Vulnerables” and Under 18 groups. Work with these groups began in February. The main group highlighted the possible need to link in with the inmates on 23 hour lock-up. Many inmates choose the option of 23 hour lock up to avoid engaging with others and to simply ‘do their time’.

Please see our observations on the Main group sessions in Appendix 2 Traveller Inmates Sessions

3. Working with the Under 18’s and “Vulnerables”

Our initial Programme was to work with the main Traveller inmate population, at the request of Wheatfield Management and Staff, we agreed to extend our Programme to include the under 18 year olds and the vulnerable inmates wing. After Christmas, we began to work with the under 18 year olds. We devised a shorter five week course to enable a further 5 week course with the ‘Vulnerable’ group, who were unable to attend the main group sessions.

The sessions with the under 18 year olds took place in the evenings and had a duration of one and a half hours, this was during their own time. We were delighted that the staff and facilitators were prepared to make this extra effort to avoid disrupting their school time during the day. These shorter sessions were also very structured and each session was able to stand alone and benefit any attendee. Within the Traveller culture, this age group would be considered a responsible adult and these younger inmates appreciated that they were recognised by our facilitators as such. This created a mutual respect and through the build-up of trust, it also encouraged more productive engagement. It was emphasised that they were attending on a voluntary basis, giving them the option to take part. At this time of the evening it is when the inmates can make their phone calls. We were flexible and enabled individuals to step out, make their call and re-join the group. This Programme taking place on their own landing gave them the feeling it was in their own space and we were delighted when everyone made the commitment to the Programme.

Overall observations of both Under 18’s and “Vulnerables”

We went in not as a group of people trying to reform the prison system but to encourage the young men to avail of the services within the prison.

These groups must attend the school, but some didn't see the point of it, as they felt it wouldn't be any addition to them. However, some expressed frustration on the lack of education facilities they had access to.

With the sessions only being 5 weeks long, the course ended at a time when trust and a relationship were just being formed. We would be very willing to work with these groups again on a longer term basis. *Please see our observations in Appendix 3 Under 18 sessions. Please see our full observations in Appendix 4 "Vulnerables" group sessions*

4. The development of Culturally Appropriate reading materials - This part of our programme was enhanced enormously by the commitment of the Governor to allow us to work with the Prison print shop in order to ensure we produce as much material as needed. From January 2015, we began to speak to the prisoner groups about recording their own stories. In April the groups felt comfortable enough to record their experiences of prison life. Some inmates wrote them in their own time outside of the group, others worked with members of the Prison Links team in documenting their stories. These accounts have been compiled into the reader "I am a Traveller Prisoner". This booklet is currently being reviewed by Governor Stack and will hopefully be made available to all participating prisoners, copies will be in the prison library and other copies used by Meath Travellers Workshops during their work with young people and other Traveller organisations e.g Navan Youth Diversionary project. The Prison Links team also supplied participants with copies of Voice of the Traveller magazine. *Please see a copy of the "I am a Traveller in Prison" publication in Appendix 5*

In addition to the publication of stories, the support services and inmates had explained their frustration and the need for information to be available detailing services for Travellers outside Prison. Information about services in Dublin were available, but not in other counties. When we looked into this, indeed there was not a publication which included all this information or a central resource online. MTW have commenced the research of Traveller organisations and support services in the island of Ireland and will be publishing the same, and also making this available online before the end of the year.

Governance

The management of this project is overseen by a steering group. Initially we discussed our proposals with Governor Kavanagh, however as the programme took shape we began to link in more with IM Keary and IM Murphy, who we worked with on a weekly basis. Before meeting with Under 18's and "Vulnerables" group we met with Assistant Governor McGuinness and also met with the prison staff who worked directly with these groups.

Meetings also took place with the teaching staff, particularly with Maria Ward and Jane Newman. We felt it was important to make this link as we were encouraging members of all three of our groups to avail of the training and education opportunities offered in Wheatfield Place of Detention.

During our time working with the inmates, several issues came up from the groups themselves which related to what happens when they leave prison. We took the opportunity to meet with Senior Probation Officer Sarah Jane Kavanagh to discuss these issues and strengthen our working relationship with this service.

Staff training was originally facilitated by IM Keary (in September 2014), in April 2015, we met with the new Training and Liaison officer Brenda Quinn to arrange the final two sessions for this year in June.

Steering Committee

A Steering Committee was set up to oversee and monitor the programme. This consisted of:

Governor Kavanagh	- Wheatfield Place of Detention
Assistant Governor Stack	- Wheatfield Place of Detention
Assistant Governor McGuiness	- Wheatfield Place of Detention
Michael McDonagh	- Meath Travellers Workshops
Ellen McDonagh	- Meath Travellers Workshops
Anne Hyland	- Meath Travellers Workshops
Sinead Burke	- Meath Travellers Workshops
IM Patrick Murphy	- Industrial Manager
IM Noreen Keary	- Industrial Manager
Sarah Kavanagh	- Principal Probation Officer
Aidan Trant	- Probation Service
Sr Joan	- Chaplaincy Service
Catherine McDonald	- Integrated Sentence Management
Gillian Byrne	- Integrated Sentence Management
Jane Newman	-Wheatfield School
William Hourigan (RIP)	- Prisoner Rep until December 2014
Andrew Thornton	- Prisoner Rep
Brian Reilly	- Prisoner Rep

A full list of meetings Appendix 6 Meetings and Sessions Hosted by Wheatfield

Traveller Individual Support

When initially drawing up this programme we envisaged these would be stand-alone scheduled sessions, however as the classroom sessions progressed, these one on ones began to happen organically throughout the breaks. They are informal and led by the prisoners and seem to be working.

This change enabled us to extend the Programme to include the Under 18 year old inmates and the Vulnerables wing. In order to facilitate two x five week Programmes, we also had to add extra weeks to the Programme.

Education

When we began working with the main group, only one member of the group attended the prison school. We have added an education element to every discussion and on the day we finished up before Christmas there were 6 members of the group attending the school. One of the most successful sessions was held in the school itself in November. The previous week we had discussed the groups' experience of education before Wheatfield. Gauging their level of accomplishment and also their feelings about accessing education was incredibly valuable as the next week we moved our group into the school. During this session Teachers in the school explained the value of completing some of the courses available and how prisoners can benefit in terms of early release. Just as importantly prisoners explained how they were unable to access literacy classes as their wings were not unlocked in time. Teachers and prison management have now given a commitment to resolve this problem.

It was noticed that only one of the prison links group currently attend the school, so this will be a great opportunity to expose the class to what the school can offer. (Appendix 2, Session # 4)

The make up of the Prisoner Groups

The number of prisoners taking part in each session averaged 8-10 and sometimes rose to 15 depending on other activities going on in the Prison, these figures were also affected by inmates being released, on temporary release or being transferred. A roll was taken at the start of each session. As the weeks have gone by places have been taken by others who have heard of the course through word of mouth and encouragement by other participants and staff. We initially advertised the programme through posters before we started. Since classes began we have not re-advertised places as word of mouth has spread and there are always new willing participants. It would be beneficial to have posters on display to inform Travellers who are have not identified themselves as Travellers, or who are not on a wing with other Travellers already involved. The vast majority of those taking part are Travellers, however we have not excluded others who wish to join. A total number of 59 inmates took part in the Programme, a record of attendance is available.

At the end of both terms (December and April) we presented participants with certificates of attendance.

Right time, right place, right people

A number of things happened to make this project a success so far. Firstly, Governor Kavanagh took a chance on the programme. He and his staff were supportive and obliging and brave in facilitating the pilot Prison Links programme.

My family think it's a great opportunity for me to do this programme, my mum and dad and sister thinks it's a great idea. I love the programme (Appendix 7)

IM Keary and IM Murphy took a keen interest in what we were doing and made a special effort to encourage and facilitate inmates to take part in the programme, the inmates involved also did the same.

When we first started the programme in Wheatfield Place of Detention, we were not strangers to the place. Michael McDonagh had had several professional visits with Shay Wildes and David McDonagh. These were preparatory in nature, and allowed Shay and David to start spreading the word immediately. The fact that this programme was Traveller led also differentiated us from other programmes.

Traveller inmates encouraged attendance and joined themselves. Non-Traveller but curious inmates also attended. The MTW team was made up of two Traveller and two 'Settled' people. With the mix of facilitators it created a comfortable environment for all taking part and also gave the opportunity for Traveller inmates to spend time with 'Settled' people who were non-judgemental and there to work together with the group. All participants could engage as equals. It was also clear that the group was being led by two Traveller representatives that the inmates had trust and respect for. During one of the feedback sessions, one inmate said *"It was brilliant because you know people we know and because of this it felt like we knew you"*. This statement from one of the participants made it very clear that any programme like this working in a prison with Travellers must have Travellers on the delivery team to ensure a fast and authentic connection with the target group.

Feedback and Evaluation

As this is a pilot programme the evaluation of this project is a tool to constantly enhance and direct the project. Comments and suggestions from both staff and inmates helped model and shape the progress of the programme. We have been keen to evaluate the Programme as we have progressed and have feedback whether positive or negative; this has allowed us to react immediately to any changes felt necessary.

We were able to assure the inmates that their issues and ideas had been added to the programme and that their input was being listened to and acted upon. (Appendix 2 Session # 2)

Traveller Participants Feedback

We are aware that we are working with people who may not be used to a classroom environment and may have literacy issues. To accommodate this, we carried out both verbal and written feedback exercises and recorded all answers. These answers were collated and allowed us to evaluate the effectiveness of the programme. ***For full details please see Appendix 7 Feedback from all Inmates***

Prison Staff Feedback

Assessments were taken from this group before and after the in-service sessions. The group were asked a set of questions on their understanding and knowledge of the Traveller community. The same questions were then revisited after the sessions to assess the impact of the class.

Approx 3 months later, further feedback was taken to ascertain the changes in behaviour and attitude since taking part in the Programme. ***For full details please see Appendix 8***

Feedback from Staff Session 1 and 2

The long term benefit of this kind of programme? “Better understanding of Traveller ways and culture” (Appendix 8)

In addition we looked for input from the Prison Officers who are working on the wings that house the inmates that took part, to see if they see any changes. ***For full details please see Appendix 9 Feedback from Staff Management and Services***

Education Staff Feedback

It was important to understand the impact that the Programme was having in inmates attending the Education and Training sessions within Wheatfield. To this aim we asked for feedback from the Education section. ***For full details please see Appendix 10 Feedback from Education Staff***

“It has broken down barriers. Relationships are more relaxed” (Appendix 10)

Recommendations

Recommendations for any future similar programme

- Importance of having a Traveller Trustee as a programme contact as a link person for the programme within the prison. He would be a good role model and also be in a position to encourage other Travellers to get involved in the Programme.

- It is important to maintain the interest and support of the Governor, Industrial Managers, Integrated Sentence Management and Teaching staff to ensure programme practicalities are taken care of.
- It is crucial to compose a steering group made up of all key stakeholders and two Traveller inmate representatives.

Recommendations for continuing the programme in Sept 2015

- Although we are still in the early stages of this programme we feel that it has been very successful and the numbers attending justify carrying on. Inmates were interested in the content and from feedback received, got something valuable out of joining the group.
- As a recommendation, we feel that as far as is possible, that we would work with one group for a set amount of more structured sessions and then repeat the Programme for a new group to make a more productive impact, but not lose the open door approach.
- The Programme needs to be advertised continually to enable Travellers within the Prison, who have not identified themselves as Travellers (for various reasons), to have an awareness of the Programme and how to engage with it. From feedback received, promotional posters were very effective at the beginning of the programme, however after they were taken down, new inmate did not always hear about the programme.
- Originally we did not plan to work with the “Vulnerables” and the under 18’s. However during the course of the year we began to meet with both groups. These sessions were very productive, however due to time constraints we were also able to do one initial meeting and then 5 structured sessions with both. These were a good start, but it was only the beginning of gaining trust and encouraging a good group dynamic. We would be very willing to do a longer set of classes with both groups in the future.
- Before the programme starts again in September, we recommend holding an information morning for inmates to explain the history and purpose of the programme and also inform potential participants of the proposed content.
- From September we will be endeavouring to help and support prisoner’s access probation and pre-release programmes within the prison system.

It should be signed around the prison, maybe a talk to help people understand the course (Appendix 7)

Observations from the Inmates - These are the key points inmates felt strongly about

- Whether real or imagined, inmates were worried about supports after their release. This is often a huge concern for inmates during their time in Prison.
- From experiences relayed to us by the groups while inside, and from our experience of ex-inmates calling to the offices of MTW, leaving prison without official photo ID causes huge practical problems in accessing payments, medical cards etc. It is important, particularly for inmates on medication, that medical cards should be applied for before release from Prison. The lack of a medical card and not having the means to pay for a much needed

After session one with inmates, it was apparent that there was huge concern within the group around what would happen to them after they left prison. (Appendix 2)

prescription can lead to returning to non-prescription drugs and in turn can lead to criminality.

- Inmates told of their frustration at accessing AA and NA meetings while in prison.

Conclusion

There is no doubt that most of our participants initially joined our group out of curiosity.

An honest and comfortable group dynamic developed. Sensitive subjects, fears for the future and feelings about Travellers and the education system were discussed in an open and productive way. As weeks passed we felt the quieter and more reserved group members came out of themselves and grew more confident in voicing their opinions. From the feedback received directly from the groups, regular members commented that it was not

This exercise enables participants to see that it is important to have more information before making decisions (Appendix 2 Session #13)

only a welcome break in their week, but also a necessary development for Traveller support in prison. Our group was seen as a safe space for Travellers and others interested in Traveller issues to talk honestly and openly about their experiences, both before and while in prison. The key to ensuring that this programme was not a segregated Programme away from the main prison population ie. 'Traveller only' place, the group agreed to welcome any non-Travellers, who had an interest in joining and who were accepted by the Traveller inmates.

'Trust' made this project a success. It was crucial for this to be built up between MTW and the group participants in order to facilitate honest conversations and exchanges. We felt we achieved this through our open approach. We treated the group members with respect and we were very honest that this was a pilot project. We were not experts and valued their opinions and input. This frankness and non-judgemental approach worked with barriers lowered from very early on in the programme. A testimony to this good relationship are the positive comments in the feedback collected

That they don't always have to keep it all bottled up and it's good to talk about it. (Appendix 7)

and the enthusiasm and honesty the group showed when contributing their stories to our booklet.

Similarly, building up a good relationship with Wheatfield staff and management was integral to getting this programme up and running well. IM's Murphy and Keary were incredibly supportive of our plans and facilitated, where possible, beyond the call of duty. Both officers also came with their own suggestions, such as working with the "Vulnerables" and Under 18's. We were very appreciative of their positive "can do" attitude.

It is a very brave step for any large established institution to take a chance on a new, unproven programme, particularly one working directly with prisoners. The vision and imagination shown by Governor Kavanagh and his management colleagues. We are thankful that they permitted this pilot programme into Wheatfield, which was the first ground breaking step in introducing what we hope to be a nationwide influential programme in working with Traveller inmates in Ireland.

It's good to just come and be yourself with other Travellers (Appendix 7)

However, very quickly an honest and comfortable group dynamic developed. Sensitive subjects, fears for the future and feelings about Travellers and the education system were discussed in an open and productive way. As weeks passed we felt the quieter and more reserved group members came out of themselves and grew more confident in voicing their opinions. From the feedback received directly from the groups, regular members commented that it was not only a welcome break in their week, but also a necessary development for Traveller support in prison. Our group was seen as a safe space for Travellers and others interested in Traveller issues to talk honestly and openly about their experiences, both before and while in prison. The key to ensuring that this programme was not a segregated Programme away from the main prison population ie. 'Traveller only' place, the group agreed to welcome any non-Travellers, who had an interest in joining and who were accepted by the Traveller inmates.

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Acknowledgements

The Prison Links Programme would not have been made possible without the help and support of the following people:

Funding from St Stephen's Green Trust

Governor Kavanagh, Asst. Governor Stack and Asst. Governor McGuinness who were brave enough to let us in the gate!

And...

The inmates from all three groups, especially those who encouraged others to take part namely:

David McDonagh, Patrick Stokes and Shay Wildes, these men in particular saw the benefits of education and training in prison and used their own positive experience and learning to promote our programme.

IM Pat Murphy and IM Noreen Keary who looked after us every week.

Andrew Thornton, Brian Reilly and William Hourigan (RIP) who represented the group on the Prison Links steering committee.

The other members of the steering committee include

Jane Newman, ISM G Byrne, ISM C McDonald, Sarah Kavanagh Senior Probation Officer and Sr. Joan Chaplaincy Service

And last but not least...The tea makers!



Appendix 1 Staff Management and Services Training Sessions

**Meath Travellers Workshops
Prison Links Project**

Staff Management and Services Training Sessions

Please find below a breakdown of the observations on the
Staff Management and Services sessions.

Date	Details	Remarks
9.9.14	Prison Staff Management and Services Session 1 of 4 Attendance 18	This session went very well. There were 18 participants. The group was mainly Prison Staff. Some of the group lived in areas with a high population of Travellers and were more aware of Traveller culture. There was a change of attitude from the questionnaire at the beginning of the session to the one completed at the end. Two Prison Staff approached us at the end to get involved in the Programme. This group will come together in 3 months time to evaluate any changes that the Programme has made to them and the Traveller inmates.
10.9.14	Prison Staff Management and Services Session 2 of 4 Attendance 19	This session included more support services and this session raised more challenging issues. There were 19 participants. It was clear from the questionnaires that many in this group considered themselves ‘non-judgemental’ and as such treat everyone the same. The challenge for the facilitators was to explain that the same is not equal or you need to consider the mind-set of a different culture. Some of the group expressed that they thought Traveller culture should change should be made from within the Traveller Community. A short meeting took place after the session with IM Keary to discuss the practicalities of the selection of Travellers for the Programme and how the Traveller sessions will be conducted. Posters would be put up around the Prison as designed by MTW, and Travellers to apply via IM Keary.
2.6.15	Prison Staff Management and Services Session 3 of 4	This group was made up of Prison Officers, Nurse Officers and some from Probation. Most of the group had opted to join the session. This led to good engagement and a certain amount of understanding already and included people who had concerns about Traveller supports in their own fields.

	Attendance 14 plus 2 staff of SSGT TPI Traveller Prison Initiative	<p>The session gives participants the opening to ask any questions they may have about Travellers and the facilitators revisit these questions at the end to make sure they have been answered. Concerns were Traveller health and medical needs, accommodation on leaving Prison, why do Travellers not engage, Family Feuds, Education for Travellers and the negative image of education, who are Travellers? And what are the positive elements of Traveller culture?</p> <p>We asked the group to complete questionnaire one at the beginning to gauge the current knowledge and then asked them to complete a similar questionnaire at the end. This group was quite knowledgeable but open to learn more and the feedback was very positive.</p>
3.6.15	Prison Staff Management and Services Session 4 of 4 Attendance 13	<p>The group was made up of Prison Officers, Nurse Officers, Probation and one ISM. This group were very interested in what we had been doing with the inmates and how were we making a difference? Whilst it was clear that members of this group were empathetic to Travellers they had concerns over self-exclusion, the lack of integration by Travellers and the lack of value seen in education. There was also interest in the reasons for family feuding and how it escalates.</p> <p>Through discussion they were looking for Traveller culture to change and could clearly see that in order for changes to happen, it must be led by Travellers themselves and changed from the inside. It was interesting but also frustrating for them to hear about the strong influence that comes from the extended family and that Travellers would see the importance of family, marriage and providing for the family above all else. Usually the Traveller culture section would take place organically based on questions, sharing of stories, but also making sure that all aspects of Traveller culture were covered.</p> <p>This session was delivered in a slightly different format, by going through thought provoking images and chatting about them. These images are usually shown after lunch to challenge the stereotypes and media images of Travellers. The subjects about Traveller culture were still covered and the session still included real stories, but it felt more structured for the facilitators. This format will be further adapted and repeated in future sessions for both the staff and inmates.</p> <p>Questionnaires were completed. The participants would like to see the course repeated and further development of how they can be more effective.</p> <p>The Staff sessions are to help to understand Traveller culture. The facilitators hope to work more closely with Probation in our second year to help develop a strategy for the Probation Services and MTW going forward</p>

Meath Travellers Workshops Prison Links Project

Please find below a breakdown of the weekly activity for the main Traveller Prisoners Group from October 2014 until April 2015.

Date	Details	Remarks
9.10.14	<p>Traveller Group Work Session #1</p> <p>Attendance 15</p>	<p>The Voice of the Traveller magazines were given out to look at while we were waiting for the group to arrive.</p> <p>The age range was from young teenagers to approx. late 40's, (although this was not discussed).</p> <p>Everyone was welcomed and was introduced to the facilitators and why this Programme was happening. An icebreaker was used to get individuals talking, and it was recognised that the group knew each other well. It included 3 non-Travellers, which was accepted by the group. Whilst discussing the aims, the word Traveller was replaced by 'you'. The group drew up a Group Behaviour Agreement.</p> <p>The aims of the Programme were explained and the group were encouraged to give their ideas and input into the Programme content. We discussed the content that we had drafted and this was acceptable to the group. In addition they would like to receive sessions on preparing for employment, looking at how to change people's views of Travellers, the pressures of being better than others.</p> <p>The individual supports are being offered to the group and there were questions as to how this would work. The practical issues will be discussed at the Steering Group Meeting.</p> <p>The selection of two Traveller representatives to sit on the Management committee was discussed. We asked the group how they would like to decide on who their spokesperson is. There was reluctance to being chosen for this, with a fear that it would affect their term if they were due for release before the end of the Programme, another obstacle was lack of confidence to speak in public. Reassurance was given that the Programme would not negatively affect their term. That the representative could change within the Programme as people's participation and confidences grow. They asked what would they have to do, and what was expected. Two initial representatives' were persuaded to take up the role for the time being Willie Hourigan and Andrew Thornton. Their names were given to Industrial Manager Keary to make arrangements for the Steering group meeting.</p>

		<p>After session one with inmates, it was apparent that there was huge concern within the group around what would happen to them after they left prison. The group suggested additional topics they would like to see covered. These are recorded separately in our notes from this session. A large number of these suggested topics related to life after prison. Taking this on board, we have decided that from Traveller inmate session 2 we will be incorporating how the scheduled content relates to life after prison. This is such a wide ranging area that we felt that touching on this in the context of every topic already scheduled for future classes will ensure we will have fully discussed this subject and it's relevance to all aspects of the inmates lives outside, in a natural organic and practical way.</p>
<p>16.10.14</p>	<p>Traveller Group Work Session #2 Attendance 9</p>	<p>This session was to cover History of Travellers and where they fit in. The number of inmates in attendance was 9, this was due to the Red Cross event taking place and the inmates on visits and one was in court. We began with a recap of the previous week, this will become a feature of all sessions to revisit and revise what was learnt and to bring the people who were unable to attend, up to date. We were able to assure the inmates that their issues and ideas had been added to the Programme and that their input was being listened to and acted upon.</p> <p>This session focused on the history of who Irish Travellers are, and where they come from and dealt with assumptions that people have around this aspect of Travellers. This session helped clarify the importance of understanding ones own history, so as to have more respect for your own heritage and identity. To begin the Programme with a session on history creates a base for future learning. It was clear that the inmates own perceptions of their history was ill-informed and confused. Two of the main points that stood out to the group was that Travellers are not damaged country people and that Travellers have their own history.</p> <p>The flow of the Programme is organic and we are allowing extra time if needed on a subject if there is a keen interest. The History session was thought provoking and encouraged discussion involving all the participants. It was felt that the section on Prejudice and Racism could be left until next week to enable the time that this subject needs.</p> <p>The final piece for the day was the clarification of who the two inmate representatives will be on the Steering committee. These are Willie Hourigan and Andrew Thornton.</p> <p>After two sessions with this group it has become apparent that the inmate group we are working with</p>

		are taking on board the content in a very personal and involved way. The connection they are displaying with the information we are giving and the discussion we are having is striking a personal cord in a way that was different to the Staff and Teachers group.
23.10.14	Traveller Group Work Session #3 Attendance 15	The difference between racism and prejudice was discussed with the group and how an unequal balance of power can affect their lives. We also looked at the how being a Traveller can have a stigma attached to it. The second steering group meeting was due to happen in the afternoon so we discussed the programme so far and worked with the two prisoner reps in preparing for it. We took care not to influence what the two men wanted to say, just prepared them to be able to speak up and express their own opinions and ideas.
6.11.14	Traveller Group Work Session #4 Attendance 13	<p>What is Traveller Culture? The negative and positive. There were four new attendees this week, so a quick recap was done on the purpose of the programme. We then revisited the last session, participants remembered talking about the difference between prejudice and racism and the effects of both. The two reps who attended the Steering Group meeting also gave feedback. They said it was interesting and were glad that they had a chance to talk about their concerns about life after prison, the effects on their families and the practical work of putting a CV together and getting employment.</p> <p>The main theme of this week was Traveller identity. We spoke about how other groups are identified and what make Travellers identifiable. The group listed specific things recognisable to them as being Traveller hallmarks. We also spoke about the positive qualities of the Traveller community. The most popular and passionate choice was family support, especially their relationships with their mother and their wives.</p> <p>Michael spoke to the group about education options in the prison. At the previous Steering Group meeting, the group were invited to hold a session in the school and use this opportunity to meet the teaching staff and learn about what the school has to offer. It was noted that only one of the prison links group currently attend the school, so this will be a great opportunity to expose the class to what the school can offer.</p>
13.11.14	Traveller Group Work Session #5 Attendance: 9	Cant language introduction. A discussion took place on what is language and what it's used for. Examples were used such as cockney rhyming slang, Cant and Gammon. The difference between slang and a language is language forms a full sentence, slang is just individual words. This was followed by people sharing words for i.e the word 'House' in Cant,

		<p>Gammon, Irish and English. The group looked at the publication Cant is Cool which was produced by Meath Travellers Workshops Cant Summer School for young Travellers. The group liked the way it was visual with an image followed by the Cant phrase followed by an English phrase. There was a suggestion to produce something similar including words in Gammon. The Gammon speaker would need assistance with the phonetic spelling as it is a oral language, not a written language. The group explained that they wouldn't be able to take photographs and would have to draw the images or source them via the facilitators.</p>
13.11.14	Individual Support	<p>Michael attended an organised one on one support meetings with one inmate. We found that usually the individual support discussions took place organically during the tea break</p>
27.11.14	<p>Traveller Group Work Session #6</p> <p>10.00-12.00</p> <p>Attendance 10</p>	<p>We reviewed last week's session around language and asked what stood out for the group?</p> <p>We explained that the group would have the opportunity to visit the school this afternoon and what opportunities this would present to them and discussed any concerns or barriers that they had encountered or that would prevent them for participating in the school. This session looked at the experience of the group in school and their education so far. It was recognised that Travellers who aren't educated academically can be very intelligent. Each person participated by sharing their experience of education, the majority had negative experiences which had an impact on their attendance in any school setting. It was clear that the lack of education had impacted on their self esteem and confidence. Some had been bullied by Teachers and other pupils and one young man had wanted to continue his education when he moved to a different area, but was unsuccessful in finding a place in any post primary school. The furthest any of the group had gone in secondary was 3rd year, but a few spoke about adult education they had availed of in either Wheatfield or other prisons and detention centres. Those who had done this explained to the others that adult education was far different than schooling when they were young. They emphasised how much they appreciated it, enjoyed it and liked being treated as an adult. This group also stressed the difference it made to then taking part in education voluntarily as an adult rather than being made to as a child.</p>
27.11.14	Traveller Group Work Session #7 Visit to the School	<p>A group of inmates met with the facilitators and two Teachers to discuss the barriers and issues for the Traveller inmates when accessing the schools</p>

	2.00-4.00 Attendance 5	<p>facilities. Practical problems were that the inmates are not let out until after the morning session has started or even finished and there is a reluctance to join the school after the session has begun. Then there appears to be no point in trying to attend the following sessions.</p> <p>The group discussed the benefits of availing of education whilst in Prison to improve and enhance their own self esteem. They also spent a lot of time discussing how attendance and participation in school can lead to advantages by gaining privileges and increasing the possibility of TR and and Community Return. One inmate said that he ‘wishes this Programme (MTW Prison Links Programme) had been here a year ago! It would have made so much difference to me’ since starting our workshop he has started linking in more with the school and has joined the music session practising his guitar skills, and has even started learning to read and write, something he had avoided since having bad experiences in school. He added ‘learning as an adult is completely different, you are treated like an adult and not made to feel a fool’.</p>
4.12.14	Traveller Group Work Session #8	At this session the Assistant Governor Stack gave out the Certificates of Attendance to the inmates; we were treated to some of the group singing some traditional songs and one young man had taken up Guitar and performed to the group. It was a powerful session as it included Staff, Teachers Governors and inmates enjoying time together and partaking in mince pies

29.1.15	2 – 4 Traveller Group Work Session #9 Attendance 8	<p>This was the first session of the New Year. It took place in the school, as our room was in use. The group included new members, a man from the Roma community and a few members from the original group. This was an introduction to the Programme for the new people and a group agreement was drawn up. The group agreed that we preferred to be in the other room.</p>
5.2.15	2 – 4 Traveller Group Work Session #10 Attendance 6	<p>It was with regret that we had to report that one of our group that had been released had died. This highlighted the importance of making links for when you leave. He had written a poem/song in November which was read out.</p> <p>His death came as a shock to the inmates and Staff alike. A plan was put in place for a Memorial next week.</p> <p>The group shared stories of their first day in Prison, some of them would help influence and prevent young men from thinking that Prison was doable.</p>

		We discussed who would be the two Reps on the Steering group, but no decision was made.
12.2.15	10-12 Memorial for William Hourigan and Facilitators invite to attend a session of the Pre Release Course	Attended a memorial for the inmate that had died, the memorial took place at the start of the Pre-Release Course session. We were facilitated to sit in for the full session to see what the Pre-Release course covers. This was very interesting and gave us a chance to explain our Programme too. It was clear that this course is vital to help make plans for the future when you leave Prison with courses, work placements and possible employment. The inmates were touched by the effort being made to remember a Prisoner who had died.
12.2.15	2 – 4 Traveller Group Work Session #11 Attendance 7	At the afternoon session one of the inmates had written his story for his son, and read it out to the group. It was powerful to witness, as his story linked very closely with what we are trying to achieve. He had entered Prison unable to read and write and had used his time in Prison to learn, which he would not do outside Prison. It was a challenge for him to stand up in front of his peers and read out his story and the group gave him an enthusiastic round of applause. The others in the group were asked to also write their story for next week.
19.2.15	2 – 4 Traveller Group Work Session #12 Attendance 7	A few new inmates joined the group. We explained what the Programme is about and invited the new members of the group to also write their story. We invited the core group to share what we had been covering, it was a good chance to revisit some issues and it meant that the core group were taking ownership and enthusing about what we had achieved so far. To encourage the writing of a story, one of the facilitators went through the ideas that could be included i.e. weather, time of year, smells, who was there, sounds you could hear, how you felt, what you missed etc.
26.2.15	2 – 4 Traveller Group Work Session #13 Attendance 9	The Boat exercise. 8 chairs were placed in the centre of the room indicating the places on the boat. It was explained that each person would be taking on a character for the purposes of the activity only. There were 12 characters and each person had to appeal for their place on the Boat, releasing one of four pieces of information. This exercise enables participants to see that it is essential to have good information before making decisions, and that it is not always good to judge based on age, profession or lifestyle choice. This activity was great fun for the group and everyone got involved. It was interesting to observe how the

		usual Prison group dynamic was changed for this exercise and how this did effect the final outcome.
5.3.15	2 – 4 Traveller Group Work Session #14 Attendance 6	We looked at some images and discussed the dangers of prejudice, and how we are all a little bit prejudice. We also discussed how people in power have the ability to act out their prejudice which is the true meaning of racism. Through this type of exercise it helped the group to see people as individuals and try not to see the uniform, colour or gender.
12.3.15	2 – 4 Traveller Group Work Session #15 Attendance 6	This particular session followed a disturbance involving three of the group, which took place outside the room. The three people involved were linked by family and marriage. We would have prepared a session, however with circumstances and particular issues that had arisen, we were flexible by providing a space to discuss and talk through the current issues and offer supports to individuals. From the outside looking in, it would appear that we were just chatting, but the subjects covered were extremely fruitful and were still in keeping with the aims of the Programme which were being met in a more organic way than a structured formal session. The discussion that followed was how and why conflict takes place and the external pressure to become involved.
19.3.15	2 – 4 Traveller Group Work Session #16 Attendance 4	The attendance at this session was very low, they inmates that did turn up were suffering from colds, but didn't want to miss the session. This caused the energy in the group to be low. There was a reluctance to get into deep discussion however we did explore the Cant language and it was surprising how some of the very traditional Travellers had very little Cant language. The exercise was visual with images and short phrases to be joined together. The Cant language was not a written language so for us to decide on the spelling, we had to be clear on the phonetics.
26.3.15	2 – 4 Traveller Group Work Session #17 Attendance 12	This group was a big group, and took place after the session with the Vulnerable group. This sparked a conversation within the group around younger inmates and their suitability and safety within the main prison population, there was a strong feeling that younger prisoners (under 18's) should not be mixing with the adults. This is indeed the case, however once they turn 18, they are moved out of the under 18 wing and into the general prison. Also there was a discussion around the option of 23 hour lockup. Surprisingly a number of Travellers opt to go under 23 hour lockup to do their time without having to mix with any other inmates.

<p>2.4.15</p>	<p>2 – 4 Traveller Group Work Session #18</p> <p>Attendance 5</p>	<p>The main activities on this day was the interviewing of the inmates by two of the facilitators. There was also discussion about traditional family craft and the skills that Travellers have. This created a feel good factor about being a Traveller, not in a reminiscing sense but Travellers today. This type of discussion is powerful by increasing self-esteem and pride in being a Traveller. Generally speaking most discussions around Travellers is often negative and involves the commotion taking place in the family and the extended family.</p>
<p>9.4.15</p>	<p>2 – 4 Traveller Group Work Session #19</p> <p>Attendance 5</p>	<p>There were four facilitators to aid the collection of people’s stories. The group could see the benefit of sharing their stories and felt that their stories were very similar although they wouldn’t have shared them in such emotional detail before. The group were invited to have artwork included, but there was nobody in this group who felt they had those skills.</p>
<p>16.4.15</p>	<p>2 – 4 Traveller Group Work Session #20</p> <p>Attendance 5</p>	<p>The group were given the first draft of the I am a Traveller in Prison book to read through and see the proposed layout and approve the names of their stories and to indicate if they were happy to have their full names included. They seemed really pleased with the outcome and proud to be part of it. This session also included a verbal evaluation and sharing of ideas for the future Programmes.</p>
<p>30 .4.15</p>	<p>2 – 4 Traveller Group Work Session #21</p> <p>Attendance 10</p>	<p>As this was the last meeting of this group, we spent the session completing fun games and exercises which focused on lateral thinking. Participants also filled out final evaluation forms and then received their certificates. It was a jovial meeting with a lovely end of term atmosphere.</p>

Meath Travellers Workshops Prison Links Project

Please find below a breakdown of the weekly activities for the Under 18 group of Prisoners

Date	Details	Remarks
9.12.14	Young Prisoners under 18 Attendance 13	We were requested to link in with the under 18 Prisoners who were perceived to be a difficult group to work with. The Prison Officers advised us to meet with this group in two small groups of 6 and 7, which worked well, although we ran short of time for the second group. Both groups of young people were quite responsive to our facilitators, we explained what we had been doing in Wheatfield Prison and as a group we carried out a short exercise which they enjoyed. They indicated that they would like to take part in a short Programme similar to the main Traveller group if they were still there, some were turning 18 and would join the main group.

The five week Programme commenced from February 2015, these sessions were facilitated from 5.30pm – 7.00pm, to enable the inmates to attend the regular school sessions and to provide the option to attend in their own time, making the programme voluntary.

19.2.15	5.30-7.00 Under 18 Prisoner Group #1 Attendance 11	<p><i>‘Thought ball’</i> icebreaker game. Introduction to the Programme, Brief history of Travellers. What is Traveller culture?</p> <p>One of the Prison officers joined us for the session as he had an interest in Traveller culture. He had just ended a sports session with the lads, and they seemed happy enough for him to join us.</p> <p>We then had a brief discussion about what makes someone a Traveller? The group were a mixture of Travellers and non-Travellers and included one member of the Roma community. The knowledge about Travellers was good.</p> <p>We remembered some of the group from before Christmas, but as there were new people we explained what the Programme was about and who we were. It was now time to get them used to talking within the group. We used a ball with favourite film, food, drink etc and threw this around the room.</p> <p>Getting to know each other and an icebreaker too.</p> <p>Before Christmas the group had said they would love a football, so we had bought a decent one for them as</p>
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		<p>a reward for taking part and also to show that we did listen to them and would follow through whenever possible. The officers had said it was a waste of time, but we wanted to give them the benefit of the doubt. To give them ownership, we got them all to sign the ball.</p> <p>The group had all participated well and seemed keen to join us again the following week. We agreed that the sessions would be more comfortable taking place on their landing, as opposed to in the school setting. This would also give them the option to engage on a voluntary basis.</p>
26.2.15	<p>5.30-7.00</p> <p>Under 18 Prisoner Group #2</p> <p>Attendance 11</p>	<p>We asked for verbal feedback from the week before, and was told that the lovely new football lasted only one day, as one of the group had kicked it into the razor wire. The group thought this was funny. There was no concept of losing out on something, it was very casual with an attitude of ‘sure we’ll get another one’. We could now see more of where the Officers were coming from.</p> <p>The Boat exercise. This is a critical thinking exercise. There are 8 places available on the ‘boat’ to get to safety. Each person was given a card with 4 pieces of information about a character, for the duration of the game they would take on this character. They all disclosed the first piece of information which generally was their occupation and they could make a case to take one of the 8 places on the boat. A judgement was made based on the skills that occupation might have, which may be of use to get the boat home safely.</p> <p>The group then took it in turns to disclose their 2nd piece of information, this often resulted in a change of opinion and a change of who remained on the boat.</p> <p>The group then took it in turns to disclose their 3rd piece of information, this again resulted in a change of opinion and a change to who remained on the boat. The participants were very vocal and opinions varied from their initial judgement based on their day to day life and the skills of the characters.</p> <p>When the 4th piece of information was revealed, a final decision had to be made which resulted in who was to be saved.</p> <p>Afterwards it was very important for the group to shake off their characters, particularly the ones who had ended up with the less popular or female characters.</p> <p>All the people expressed the benefits they got from learning critical decision making through games. We observed that having fun while learning reinforces the experience and makes it more memorable. The</p>

		group continued to recall this learning throughout the Programme.
5.3.15	5.30-7.00 Under 18 Prisoner Group #3 Attendance 10	<p>The first half of this session was to be about Traveller History, the group showed little interest in the subject. Earlier today we had been working on the production of a booklet 'reader' about 'My first day in Prison'. One of the stories collected from the adult group was read out. In it the author explained how he had gone down the wrong road, he was a hard man and admitted in his story that he had cried on his first day in Prison. The group were affected by the story and we asked the group if they would like to add their stories? We explained that what they had to say was important too. Some of them said they would. The second part of the session was called :- <i>Label Jars not People</i>. This exercise explored the traits that are linked to particular groups of people. The four groups that we looked at were Travellers, Asylum Seekers, Guards and people of African origin. We explained what an Asylum seeker is and discussed people's observations of people of African origin living in Ireland.</p> <p>The idea was to, in pairs, put their post its of traits onto the four different flip chart pages for each group.</p> <p>As members of the group were from the Travelling community, this flip chart page looked very positive and strong. One of the non-Travellers tried to add a not so complimentary word to the Travellers page, which was challenged. The Guards page was quite negative, but one of the group highlighted that how can we judge the Asylum seekers, when we don't even know anything about them. This was the 'message' of the exercise, so this was brilliant, rather than one of the facilitators having to say it, but we also were able to reinforce that you cannot generalise about any of these Groups, there is good and bad in all Groups.</p>
12.3.15	5.30-7.00 Under 18 Prisoner Group #4 Attendance 10	<p>The lads had shown an interest in learning more about Cant. Some of the non-Travellers knew more than some of the Travellers. So the 'Cant' exercise consisted of Flip chart pages with 8 photographs per page, 24 in all, and in pairs they had to match the phrase to the photo. Then these were observed by the group and corrected by the Facilitator. The group really enjoyed this session and they could see that Cant was indeed a language and not 'slang'. There was confusion between slang, Cant, Gaelic and English slang. Some of the words they used were made up words, modern slang.</p> <p>One of the group took a facilitator to one side to hand over his story to be added to the booklet. They asked that it wasn't read out.</p>

<p>19.3.15</p>	<p>5.30-7.00</p> <p>Under 18 Prisoner Group #5</p> <p>Attendance 11</p>	<p>This was the final week and we gave an update on how the booklet was progressing. One of the group had their story to add and was feeling really positive as they were due out shortly and had grown so much in confidence that they did not intend to return to Prison. They were going to do things differently when they got out.</p> <p>We took part in a discussion about <i>People you admire and why?</i></p> <p>The answers included My Mum – for putting up with me and supporting me, Martin Cahill (The General), Tupac, John Joe Nevin, The Nun who comes in to visit us as she is so kind and brings us stuff, my Brother because he’s the one I’d talk to if I was in trouble etc We looked at what traits these people had which make us admire them. We often admire people we are like, so the inmate who admire the Nun for her kindness, has kindness at his core too. We discussed Martin Cahill and his ability to plan ahead, his quick thinking but also the fact that he didn’t take drugs, had two women on the go and was not intimidated by the IRA. An ordinary decent criminal. We also talked about John Joe Nevin who is a Traveller who has gone professional in the Boxing fraternity and has been very successful. It was sad though that some of the group couldn’t think of anyone, this emphasised that these young men feel lost with no real role models and are simply influenced by their peers.</p> <p><i>Evaluation</i> Finally we asked the group to complete a written evaluation form for our report, offering assistance with anyone needing help with their writing. This was the last day of our Programme and there was an element of sadness to be saying goodbye for the last time, but with cheerful assurances that we won’t see them back in Prison again.</p>
<p>30.4.15</p>	<p>Attendance 5</p> <p>Certificates</p>	<p>This was a very short visit to the group. Certificates of participation given out to those who took part and Michael made a short speech congratulating them on their achievement.</p>

Appendix 4 Vulnerable Prisoners Sessions

Meath Travellers Workshops Prison Links Project

Please find below a breakdown of the weekly activity of the 'Vulnerable' Prisoners sessions March- April 2015.

Date	Details	Remarks
9.12.14	'Vulnerables' Attendance 6	We were requested to link in with the young and venerable Prisoners who were excluding themselves from the main population for various reasons. The group consisted of 6 young people, half Traveller and half non-Traveller. They were quite quiet at first but soon became more responsive to our facilitators. We explained what we had been doing in Wheatfield Prison and as a group we carried out a short exercise which they enjoyed. They also indicated that they would like to take part in a short Programme similar to the main Traveller group and particularly were interested in researching their own family tree.
26.3.15	10.00 -12.00 'Vulnerables' #1 Attendance 6	<p>Introductions We introduced ourselves, why we were there and explained the Programme and how it was going so far. We introduced the idea of contributing to the development of a booklet about My First Day in Prison. The group were keen about the idea and agreed to work on their story for next week.</p> <p>Thought Ball – This is a ball with 'favourite film' etc, that you say your favourite depending on where your thumb lands. This enables the group to share more individual ideas and get to know each other better. They were able to talk about good times in their lives, like holidays. During the tea break we heard about their routine ie. the yard and what they are doing in school. They asked us loads of questions, did we know anyone in jail and a little about ourselves. This was a great way to begin to break down barriers.</p> <p>Pick a picture and talk about it – The pictures were laid out on the table and the inmates were asked to take one and talk about it. They took some time to choose, but this may have been due to the amount of choice. This was a format to encourage each person talking within the group but talking about something else, which could be more comfortable.</p>
2.4.15	10.00 -12.00 'Vulnerables' #2	<p>Who do you put off the boat? Exercise The number of characters on the island was reduced before starting this activity to accommodate the smaller group. We spoke about the importance about</p>

	Attendance 6	<p>decision making and the process, having the right information and how this was interpreted. The more information we have the better decisions are made. We also recognised that our attitudes often stem from someone's profession rather than their skills and them as a person. It was clear that even though they had good information to make a decision, their attitude towards those in authority wasn't going to change.</p> <p>Their attitude towards women and ageism was very negative.</p> <p>They all expressed that it was great craic and you could have fun while learning. They were very enthusiastic and enjoyed the debate and sometimes seemed to surprise themselves with their answers.</p> <p>Story collection One inmate had completed their story and had also drawn a sketch. The rest of the group seemed more hesitant, this was due to low literacy levels. It was agreed that the next week, the facilitators would help them individually because their stories were important.</p>
9.4.15	10.00 -12.00 'Vulnerables' #3 Attendance 5	<p>Today there were four facilitators that joined the group, to help with taking notes and writing individuals stories. The draft booklet was given out to the group and they could see it was taking shape. The collection of the stories took up most of the session, the inmate who had already written his story further helped the booklet by creating another sketch. It was explained that the stories would be typed up for their approval, but the final approval would have to come from the Governor. During the 'interviews' they were asked what they missed being inside, sometimes this was a particular food, missing family and missing doing what they want.</p>
16.4.15	10.00 -12.00 'Vulnerables' #4 Attendance 6	<p>The inmates were given the 2nd draft, with the opportunity to approve their story and the title used. There was one new member to the group and his story was collected by a facilitator. The feedback from the group was that the booklet was looking good. We explained that we wanted it to look more user friendly and we would like to put in some quotes. So feedback was given about what they had enjoyed so far.</p>
30.4.15	10.00 -12.00 'Vulnerables' #5 Attendance 6	<p>As this was our last session with this group, it was more relaxed and less structured. We filled the sessions with games and fun exercises such as mind puzzles and riddles. We also asked the group to fill in their final feedback forms and then presented their certificates. Inmates spoke of their plans for when they were getting out. It was a very uplifting and positive session.</p>

Appendix 6 Meetings and Sessions hosted by Wheatfield

Meath Travellers Workshops Prison Links Project

Please find below a record of the sessions that the Facilitators attended which were hosted by Wheatfield Place of Detention from October 2014 until April 2015.

Date	Details	Remarks
9.5.14		Wheatfield Prison Discussion about the possibilities of a Traveller Prison Links Programme
19.5.14		Wheatfield Prison Discussion about the possibilities of a Traveller Prison Links Programme and what format this could take
30.5.14		Wheatfield Prison Discussion about the draft Traveller Prison Links Programme
2.6.14		ITM AGM in Port Laois Michael Donnellan Head of Prison Service Mr Vivienne Guerin Probation Service
16.10.14	Red Cross Event	The facilitators were delighted to be able to stay for the afternoon to attend the international Red Cross Event
23.10.14	Steering Group Meeting	A report was circulated on both Staff and Prisoner sessions so far. The content of the prisoner sessions is growing with the group according to their concerns and interests, with particular attention being paid to how they will cope once released. An important link was made with Jane Newman and the school. MTW voiced concerns about accessing the inmates on 23 hr lock up. Certificates will be awarded at the end of the course. It was agreed to meet with the different support agencies every three months to create an interagency approach and also to follow up with staff after this time period to assess any changes after training. The main purpose of this programme is to instil confidence and encourage education. MTW are keen to learn more about education and counselling service on offer to help encourage this.
4.12.14	Steering Group meeting	Review the Programme so far and determine future sessions and support meetings Feedback from the Staff Management and Services was collected by IM Keary as the Programme schedule has been disrupted; she explained that due to shift changes, she was unable to capture both groups. The two Traveller reps will be collecting feedback to bring to the Steering group, giving the opportunity for individuals to give anonymous feedback.

29.1.15	5.30-7.00 Planning meeting re Under 18 group	The facilitators met with the Staff from 3F, the ISM and Teachers. It was agreed that a 5 week Programme will take place from 5.30-7 so it will not distract the young men from attending school. The staff agreed to facilitate this happening.
12.2.15	10-12 Memorial for William Hourigan and Facilitators invite to attend a session of the Pre Release Course	Attended a memorial for William Hourigan which formed part of the Pre-Release Course. We were facilitated to sit in for the full session to see what the Pre-Release course covers. This was very interesting and gave us a chance to explain our Programme too. It was clear that this course is vital to help make plans for the future when you leave Prison with courses, work placements and possible employment. The inmates were touched by the effort being made to remember a Prisoner who had died.
12.2.15	4.00	Met with the Governor of the Youth Assistant Governor McGuinness to discuss the Programme
9.4.15	4.00	Met with Chief Quinn Staff Training Co-ordinator
16.4.15	4.00	Met with Governor Kavanagh and the two IMs to discuss the development of the Booklet
30.4.15	4.00	Met with Senior Probation Officer Kavanagh
20.5.15	11.00	Steering group meeting. The meeting was attended by the full Steering group. There was an opportunity for people to comment on the report and also reflect on the pilot Programme. Input was made by the facilitators, the inmates and the staff who had close links with the Programme. The group looked at the recommendations and the Programme in September and how information can be shared with Prisoners and in particular the Traveller inmates to encourage attendance and also to inform them of other services. It was suggested that an Open Information event take place in the Hall where every service has an information stand. This type of event had taken place some time ago, the inmates recalled that this event could only be attended if 'your name was down', and this would need looking at. It was suggested that an information session take place for anyone to attend to explain what the Programme was about before the next Programme begins.
28.5.15	10-12.30	The facilitators were delighted to be invited to visit Thornton Hall, together with an ISM and the Training and Employment Officer, this was with the kind support and encouragement by IM Murphy. Thornton Hall supports return to community, community service & also day release from Mountjoy Prison. The horticulture and building renovation work that has been carried out in the last 18 months in Thornton Hall gave us food for thought and great inspiration for the development of a smaller scale Project on our land in Carnaross Kells Co. Meath.

Appendix 7 Feedback from all inmates

Prison Links Programme Inmates Questionnaire

This will be anonymous, so please answer honestly, thank you ☺

1. What changes have you noticed in the way you think about Travellers?

- Gas they are funny chaps
- I never had a problem with Travellers because I know a lot of them
- I know more about them
- I grew up with Travellers I knew alot about Travellers
- Always being around Travellers I know more about Travellers history and culture now
- Small wee bit
- I always thought of Travellers same as anybody , we're all humans
- They have become accepted in the prison
- I know more about Traveller culture and respect it more
- That they can make a good impression on our lives
- Same, hasn't changed much
- They're well able to go out and get well paid jobs and respect in the community
- Nothing, I grew up with Travellers
- Not much difference
- Built a positive communication together
- Same
- I grew up with Travellers all my life

2. Since the start of the Programme, what changes have you seen in the attitude of Prison staff?

- None
- No changes still the same plain old screws
- No change same as always
- nothing
- one or two have become more interested
- no changes
- the same
- gobshites
- none they are all the same
- not really
- Mr Murphy and Chief Keary are very helpful and supportive to me
- not much difference
- early yet, but getting there
- none no difference not one of the officers has ever mentioned about the programme to me

- none

3. Has the Programme been talked about by other Prisoners and what have they said?

- Not that I have heard off
- They said it will help you
- It was helpful
- Yes they think it's only for Travellers
- Yes, like going to the sessions, enjoy it and it's a great buzz
- No
- That it is a good programme and they help to understand what you're going through
- Yes they said that it is good
- We always look forward to going to the group we all like it
- No not really
- Its good in some way
- Yes asking what it was all about
- It's good to just come and be yourself with other Travellers
- Yes we spoke about how good it was and looked forward to it
- I love the programme, I talk about it to other lads all the time
- Yes they all seem to like it
- I don't mix with others
- Yeah, the boys I do it with like it

4. Have you told your family about the Programme? And what did they think about you taking part?

- Yes they thought it was good
- Yes passes a bit of time
- Yes and they think it's good to talk about everything
- Yes they thought it would be good for me
- Not told them, because first time on the programme
- Yes they thought it was good that I was taking part
- Yes I told them, they told me to take part in the programme and learn as much as I can from it
- Not told them
- Ye she happy that I'm doing something
- Ye they think its good
- Yes, they think it's a good idea
- Yes they thought it was a good thing for me to do
- Yes but not taking part on the outside
- My family think it's a great opportunity for me to do this programme my mum and dad and sister thinks it's a great idea I love the programme
- Yes, I told them and my family told me to keep doing the programme
- Yes and they thought it was a good idea to do
- Talking to family, think its great

5. This is the first time this Programme has been done, what changes do you think would make the Programme better?

- very good
- no history
- give us a bit longer time
- nothing
- it is good same way
- it is good
- more time longer sessions
- its good the way it is
- make it a longer programme
- None
- More time together and more games - no history
- More activities
- It should be signed around the prison, maybe a talk to help people understand the course
- More resources and more choices for prisoners getting out
- Nothing, only keep pushing to other prisons the rest will follow
- Make the programme longer there wasn't enough time for us, make it last much longer it helped me about judging other people
- Its fine the way it is
- Doesn't need any changes good the way it is
- If it was done with more people and done more

6. What would you see as the long term benefit of this kind of Programme if it was expanded to other Prison Services in Ireland?

- Change the way people go when they get outside and change the way people see about Travellers
- Prisoners change and family's more understanding about us in prison
- Yes it would help others to stay out of prison
- That they don't always have to keep it all bottled up and its good to talk about it
- It would be helpful for prisoners
- Very good
- Travellers and non Travellers getting on better
- Help guys out
- Probably people fought more
- Bring this programme to other prisons and use the team that ran this programme to do so in other jails
- To be proud to be a Traveller and more support for Travellers in prison and when they get out
- Other Travellers coming out of their shells, new openness and having a voice

- This programme should be done in all jails; I've always judged other people. After we did this programme it helped us not to judge others - this programme was brilliant I loved doing it
- Helped me to think about myself helped me to not judge others great place, great programme to help prisoners should be done in all jails
- You get something out of it when your leaving
- It would help people take their head off being in prison for awhile
- Educating people to try to change
- It would help people take their head off being in prison for awhile

Appendix 8 Feedback from Staff Sessions 1 and 2

Prison Links Programme 2014 Feedback from Staff sessions 1 & 2 This feedback was taken three months after taking part in the Traveller Culture Awareness Sessions

Feedback from the Staff Management and Services was collected by IM Keary as the Programme schedule had been disrupted and we would like to feedback to the Steering Group, she explained that due to shift changes, she was unable to capture both groups.

The questions asked were:-

1. What changes have you noticed in the way you think about Travellers?

The answers ranged from 'More understanding of Traveller background' to 'No Change as I always treat everyone the same'

2. What changes have you seen in the attitude of other Prison staff that took part?

The answers included 'Not as quick to judge Travellers'; 'If staff are treated with respect it will be reciprocated' 'We are professionals to every ethnic minority and always treat everyone the same'

3. Has the Programme taking place effected other people who did not take part in the Programme?

The answers indicated that this was a hard one to answer 'I feel others need to take part in the course, they may not be aware of the problems faced by Travellers; 'Not sure what the question means' and 'No'

4. What changes have you seen in the participation of Travellers in education and training?

The answers ranged from 'Travellers are more eager to learn and put themselves forward'; 'They are very interested in the workshop on Thursdays' 'Big improvement with the Travellers on my unit' and 'None so far'

5. What changes would you suggest for the further development of this Programme?

The answers to this question were very similar and interestingly suggested that there should be mixed staff and Traveller inmate workshops. 'Expand it'; 'Use prisoners that are doing a sentence as well' most very positive but one said to 'scrap it'

6. What would you see as the long term benefit of this kind of Programme if it was expanded to other Prison Services in Ireland?

The answers ranged from 'it would benefit everyone concerned; 'better understanding of Traveller ways and culture' and 'Integration of Travellers into the education and work system'

Appendix 9 Feedback from Staff and Management

Prison Links Programme Feedback from Staff Management and Services who have been supporting the facilitation of the Traveller Prison Links Programme

This will be anonymous, so please answer honestly, thank you 😊

7. Have the participants talked to you about the Programme? And what did they say about it?

- *They spoke briefly, some prisoners who attended found it interesting.*
- *Yes finding it good to get back to their roots and traditions.*
- *No. Not to me.*
- *Yes they said it was great.*

8. Since the start of the Programme, what changes have you seen in the Travellers taking part?

- *I haven't noticed any change.*
- *Same as before, normal.*
- *None.*
- *More open to talking.*

9. Since the start of the Programme, what changes have you seen in the Prison Staff Management and Services that took part in the training?

- *From hearing some of the staff who attended the course, it had changed their view on Traveller culture, it seems they found it interesting.*
- *More understanding of their way of life.*
- *None that stands out.*
- *None.*

10. Since the start of the Programme, what changes have you seen in the relationships between inmates and Prison staff ?

- *I do think the course gave officers a more understanding of the Traveller culture.*
- *More understanding of their way of life.*
- *No change, normal relationship as usual.*
- *None*

11. Has the Programme been talked about by other Prisoners and what have they said?

- *Not really spoken about by non-Traveller prisoners*
- *Not that I heard.*
- *Haven't heard.*
- *Yes they said it sounds interesting.*

12. This is the first time this Programme has been done, what changes do you think would make the Programme better?

- *Programme available to all prisoners, not just those in the Travelling Community.*
- *Maybe get Travellers to integrate themselves with our culture more?*
- *Include all staff in the initiative.*
- *Better facilities.*

13. What would you see as the long term benefit of this kind of Programme if it was expanded to other Prison Services in Ireland?

- *Knowledge of a minority in jail.*
- *People (officers and prisoners) may be more understanding to the Traveller culture.*
- *Yes of course, especially with a high Traveller population.*
- *I'm sure it could serve to educate, but I have seen no outstanding problems before or after talks given.*
- *Not much.*
- *Give better understanding of Travellers.*

14. Is there any other comments you would like to add?

- *Participants have carried on as normal.*
- *I have never seen Travellers treated differently on this unit.*

Appendix 10 Feedback from Education Staff

Prison Links Programme Feedback from Education Staff who have been actively involved in the facilitation of the Traveller Prison Links Programme

This will be anonymous, so please answer honestly, thank you ☺

15. Have the participants talked to you about the Programme? And what did they say about it?

- *Yes, they have given me very positive feedback re: the programme. The Travellers felt more included in the Pre-Release programme in the Education Unit. It heightened their awareness of the supports available to them prior to their release.*

16. Since the start of the Programme, what changes have you seen in the Travellers taking part?

- *They were more confident in themselves in communicating with some of the teachers and participants in the Pre-Release class. They had less difficulty in expressing their needs openly in the class context.*

17. Since the start of the Programme, what changes have you seen in the Prison Staff Management and Services that took part in the training?

- *It has raised much more awareness of Travellers culture and their need to be recognised as a unique ethnic minority grouping within the prison context. It has been received well and supported by the Prison Staff in Wheatfield. This has been a very positive initiative for the Traveller population and Staff within Wheatfield.*

18. Since the start of the Programme, what changes have you seen in the relationships between inmates and Prison staff ?

- *I have seen a huge improvement in the way the Staff and Travellers interact with one another. There is more equality and respect in their relationships towards one another. It has broken down barriers. Relationships are more relaxed.*

19. Has the Programme been talked about by other Prisoners and what have they said?

- *Yes, other Prisoners were surprised that Travellers were receiving such positive discrimination in ensuring that their educational and welfare needs were being met within the prison regime. They were very supportive.*

20. This is the first time this Programme has been done, what changes do you think would make the Programme better?

- *In future planning we could allocate an afternoon in the school on a weekly basis to address the educational and learning needs of the Traveller community. Literacy and Pre- Release needs could be addressed with the support of the Meath Travellers group. Educational materials specific to Travellers and information re: Travellers Centres upon release would be greatly welcomed. A meeting with the Head Teacher in June to allocate a room on a weekly basis for the academic term in Sept 2015 would be advantageous.*

21. What would you see as the long term benefit of this kind of Programme if it was expanded to other Prison Services in Ireland?

- *It would increase awareness in recognising and acknowledging the cultural uniqueness of the Travelling community within the prison service and Irish society.*

22. Is there any other comments you would like to add?

- *It was paramount that the Travellers from the Meath community were contributing to this programme within the prison context. It is the first time that Prison Management has supported such a practical programme to meet the needs of the Travelling community within the prison context and they need to be congratulated for doing so. It has been a great success.*
