



Auld Pavee Beoirs and Glokes

emerging voices of older Travellers

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PAVEE POINT
TRAVELLERS CENTRE



Foreword

As Director of Pavee Point it gives me great pleasure to present the study '*Auld Pavee Beoirs and Glokes – Emerging voices of older Travellers*'

For many years *Pavee Point* has worked to promote the social inclusion of Travellers into the wider community. During that time, we have worked in close association with many Travellers, and in particular, many older Travellers from the Finglas and Blanchardstown areas. The definition of 'older people' among Travellers is quite different to that of the majority population. Many Travellers would be grandparents at 40 years of age although, similar to the majority population, the demographic profile of the Traveller community is changing as people are marrying later, having fewer children and in general living longer.

Nonetheless, the age profile of Travellers remains very different to that of the general population. According to Census 2006, older people (i.e. those aged 65 years old and older) account for just 2.6% of the total Traveller population, compared to 11% of the general population. Conversely, 62% of Travellers are under 25 years of age. Furthermore, the lower life expectancy of Travellers when compared to the national population is a considerable cause for alarm and an indicator of the poor status of the health of Travellers.

The most recent study to predict life expectancy rates among Travellers indicated that at birth Traveller men can expect to live on average 10 years less than their majority counterpart. Traveller women can expect to live 12 years less.

Just like older people in the majority population, older Travellers are experiencing increased loneliness and social isolation in modern Ireland. Unlike the majority population, these difficulties are compounded by racism, higher than average rates of poverty and significant levels of social exclusion based on ethnicity - experiences common to many Travellers. In light of these circumstances, it is imperative that policy makers, service providers, Traveller organisations and other community based organisations ensure that older Travellers are included in their work and, just as importantly, in their strategic thinking going forward.

Pavee Point is in a position to offer support, guidance, information and training to service providers, Traveller organisations and community based organisations to assist them in reaching out and engaging effectively with this marginalised and often overlooked section of the community.

The voice of older Travellers is filled with wisdom, experience, culture and heritage. Like all older people, that voice should be cherished and empowered both within the Traveller community and among the wider community in Ireland.

Ms Ronnie Fay,
Director,
Pavee Point Travellers' Centre

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Chapter 1 – Introduction

“Ah I still miss the aul travelling, it’d always come into me brain, the old road that’d be somethin’, people’d be new.”

Traveller Man, Finglas

1.1 Background

‘Pavee Beoirs an’ Glokes’ (Older Traveller Women and Men) is an exploratory research project exploring the groundwork for establishing a network for older Travellers in the Finglas and Blanchardstown area of Dublin. The project was kindly funded by the Age and Opportunity Pilot Grant scheme. The project was facilitated by the Pavee Point Primary Health Care project which consists of a number of older Traveller Community Health Workers from the Finglas-Blanchardstown area. Assistance on the research components was provided by the Research and Policy unit in Pavee Point. Pavee Point is a non-governmental Organisation (NGO) of Travellers and settled people working in partnership to promote human rights and social inclusion for Travellers in Ireland.

1.2 Aims and Objectives

The project had two main aims –

- Strengthening the voice of older people
- Promoting the capacity of older people to lead initiatives that improves their position in society.

To meet the aims, the following objectives were identified:

- To produce a baseline study on needs and aspirations of older Travellers
- To work towards the establishment of a network for older Travellers in the Finglas and Blanchardstown area.
- To engage the network in a pilot project of their choice to develop their network and organisational skills.

1.3 Context

The changing economic, social and demographic profile of Ireland has had a disproportionate effect on the Traveller community in Ireland. Nowhere is this more keenly observed than among older Travellers who are experiencing ever more marginalisation both in Irish society and within their own communities.

It is, of course, common for all cultures to evolve and adapt to changing economic or social circumstances, e.g. economic changes such as the development of farm technology as a replacement for human labour or the introduction and mass production of plastic ware as a cheap and durable alternative to tin. However, the imposition of more recent

restrictions on traditional Traveller practices such as restrictions on horse trading, casual trading and nomadism has served to accelerate the natural evolution of Traveller culture in a way that impacts more acutely on older people.

Simultaneous policies of assimilation and exclusion repress the validity of traditional practices while promoting conformity with mainstream 'settled' practices.

Older Travellers have expressed frustration at the loss of control induced by such restrictions and expressed alarm at the growing level of discrimination and intolerance emanating from an increasingly hostile settled community.

While welcoming increased levels of literacy and, as a result, opportunity among younger Travellers, older Travellers find adapting to the pace of such changes and the subsequent erosion of intergenerational solidarity to be equally unsettling. Another challenge for older Travellers is the pace of change that is occurring within their community.



In times past, older Travellers commanded a lot of respect among the Traveller community. There is however, evidence of growing inter-generational conflict. Some older Travellers fear that they are no longer respected in their own communities and some have reported experiences of abuse. Such abuse can manifest itself both physically and verbally. Older Travellers have highlighted experiences of being subjected to insulting comments by younger Travellers about being 'thick and ignorant' as they have no formal education.

Older Travellers have expressed finding such developments as shocking and very hard to cope with. The issue of long stay care is also a more recent phenomenon for older Travellers. Increasingly older Travellers are going to nursing homes which would have being unheard of a few years ago. Unfortunately, staff are often ill equipped to cope with cultural differences among residents and lack formal training in cultural awareness / anti racism measures necessary to adequately and sensitively facilitate older Travellers.

There are many emerging issues for older Travellers and this pilot will provide an opportunity to document the issues and hopefully to identify ways to address those needs. This report recognises that the voice of older Travellers is the most important voice for articulating their own needs and aspirations. Working with a number of older Travellers the project identifies barriers to local service provision, facilitates participants in developing their own local network model to promote social inclusion and seeks to understand how older Travellers cope with changing cultural circumstances while preserving their identity and promoting inclusion.

Chapter 2 – Methodology

“A lot of young people can read and write now and do an awful lot of things that we couldn’t do because, into the door of a school I never was. And I tell you I had four kids and I reared them here and they all went to school and they all got good schooling. That’s one thing we didn’t get.

Traveller Man, Finglas

2.1 Background

This project consists of a three components; qualitative, quantitative and practical. At every stage of this project, older Travellers were consulted on their views as to how the project should proceed. Two older Travellers (with the assistance of two younger Travellers) assisted in the research aspect of this report, acting as gatekeepers to the interviewees and assisting in identifying local services for the quantitative survey. Older Travellers from the Finglas and Blanchardstown area also participated in a planned pilot network event during July, 2008.

2.2 Consultation

During the initial planning phase of the project, older Travellers were consulted on what they expected to learn from the project and how the project would feed into the establishment of the network. The older Travellers expressed a desire to have their voices heard in the research, their needs and experiences forming the basis for the network. Travellers also expressed a wish that the network be linked in with other local services to facilitate greater participation of older people in the community.

2.3 Project components

The four components of this project were: A census of older Travellers living in the Finglas and Blanchardstown area; A qualitative research module to determine the needs and experiences of older Travellers; A quantitative research model to determine the extent to which local services were accessible to older Travellers; A ‘pilot network’ event involving older women from Finglas hosting an intercultural event with nomadic musicians from Mali who were visiting Ireland in July. 9

2.4 Census

A census of older Travellers was conducted on sites in the Finglas and Blanchardstown area. For the purposes of this project, older Travellers were identified as any Traveller over 55 years of age. Census 2006 reveals that nationally, less than 3 percent of Travellers are over the age of 65 while more than half the population are under 18 years of age. This is the primary rationale for including Travellers from 55 years and upwards.

The older Travellers identified known Traveller accommodation sites in the Finglas and Blanchardstown area for the census. Information was gathered using a mix of local knowledge and the Pavee Point database. A census of the older Traveller population in

Finglas and Blanchardstown revealed that there are at least 45 Travellers over the age of 55 years residing in these areas at present. This figure represents approximately 4.4 per cent of the known Traveller population in these areas. To protect the privacy and confidentiality of respondents, information would be not further disaggregated.

2.5 Qualitative Research

A series of focus groups and one to one interviews were held with older Travellers from both the Finglas and Blanchardstown areas. Three focus groups were held in total. One focus group was held with women from the Finglas area only. One focus group was held with a mix of women from Finglas and Blanchardstown and one focus group was held with men from the Finglas area.

In addition, three one-to-one interviews were held in Blanchardstown with two women and one man. The older Travellers assisting on the project acted as gate keepers for all of the respondents with consent sought from each participant prior to interviews or focus groups. In addition the one-to-one interviewees and the participants of the male focus group were given €20 each as an expression of gratitude for taking part.

2.6 Quantitative Research

A postal questionnaire was sent to service providers in the Finglas and Blanchardstown area. It was decided to use a postal questionnaire as the survey was covering two large geographical suburban areas. Data from the survey was analysed using statistical software and is largely descriptive.

2.6.1 Instrument.

The survey instrument was devised in consultation with older Traveller women working in the primary health care project in Pavee Point and piloted with three local community service providers. These service providers also participated in the survey proper. The majority of the survey instrument consisted of multiple choice questions with a small number of open ended questions.

2.6.2 Sample

Older Travellers assisting on the project identified service providers in each area deemed suitable to participate in the survey. Services were identified using existing local knowledge and experience of services (particularly voluntary services), directory listings and the Pavee Point database of services. For the purpose of this project the definition of services did not include retail or commercial enterprises with the exception of financial services. All other participants related to professional, community, voluntary and statutory service providers. In total, 109 services providers were identified with 61 located in Finglas and 48 in Blanchardstown.

2.7 Pilot Network Project

Older women participating in the research organised a pilot network event as an exercise in exploring the potential benefits of an older Traveller Network. The women met with the Liam O'Maonlai and Paddy Keenan, an older Traveller traditional Irish musician, and a group of nomadic musicians from Dambé – the Mali project. The meeting was a cultural and artistic exchange.

Chapter 3 - Qualitative Analysis

“A lot of young people can read and write now and do an awful lot of things that we couldn’t do because, into the door of a school I never was. And I tell you I had four kids and I reared them here and they all went to school and they all got good schooling. That’s one thing we didn’t get.”

Traveller Woman, Blanchardstown

3.1 Introduction

A qualitative research study was carried out with older Travellers living in the Finglas – Blanchardstown area. The overall aim of this stage of the initiative was to ensure that the network reflected the experiences and needs of older Travellers, as identified by them. In this sense, the initiative aligned itself with an action research approach, whereby ‘research findings feed directly back into the environments from which they are generated’ (Ritchie & Lewis, 2006). The objectives were:

- To explore the experiences of older Travellers living in Finglas and Blanchardstown;
- To ascertain their views regarding the value of an older Travellers network;
- To identify how an older Traveller’s network could best meet their needs.

The difficulties in accessing a vulnerable population for research purposes have been well documented (Atkinson & Flint, 2001). This is of relevance for any research involving the Traveller population in Ireland.

It is even more of an issue for older Travellers (55+), who have been shown to have a very low rate of service use and who comprise less than five percent of the entire Traveller population (CSO, 2006). In addition, Traveller men can be less likely to participate in social research studies, due to their lower level of involvement in community development organisations. The research design attempted to address these challenges.

A collaborative approach was adopted, whereby a Traveller man and woman received training in qualitative interviewing techniques. Each of them co-conducted the interviews and focus groups with the study researcher. The first five participants were accessed through their existing contact with Pavee Point and the snowballing technique was successfully adopted with these first participants to access others. In total, seventeen older Traveller men and women participated in both focus groups and face to face interviews. Their ages ranged from 55 to 80 (see table below for summary).

Table 3.1 Profile of Participants

Gender	55-65 yrs	65-75 yrs	75-80 yrs
Male participants	3	2	1
Female participants	7	3	1
Total	10	5	2

These interviews and focus groups were recorded and transcribed verbatim. The data were analysed using the method of thematic content analysis.

3.2 Discrimination and Exclusion from Services

Recent research has shown that the Traveller community face the highest degree of discrimination against them than any other minority group in the country (Curry, 2000). These findings are confirmed in this exploratory study. This was associated with a perceived tendency within the majority ethnic community to view the Traveller community collectively responsible for the individual behaviour of an individual:

If they have a bad experience with one Traveller, they blame all Travellers. I don't think that should be the way. You could have two Traveller families and they could be like chalk and cheese. Travellers all get tarred with the same brush; I don't think that's right.

Traveller Women, Focus Group

Some interviewees who had lived in England in the past described a generally positive experience with the majority ethnic group there, with which their experience in Ireland compared very unfavourably:

I find Irish people their self kind of hard to get to know, 'cause you never really get past them. Now I lived in England for years, we lived in flats and in a house, and the difference in the people in the shops and in the houses that'd be living around us, just unbelievable. They make you so welcome.

Traveller Woman, Focus Group

You're more than a Traveller in England, you're Irish so and that's the way to go with it, you were Irish, you weren't a Traveller to them.

Traveller Woman, Focus Group

It's very hard to have to say this, but I suppose from England they look at us there, they accepted us, the nationality anywhere, you know what I mean, they were that sort, you got that there. I was only barred out of a pub once, me and me husband, and I'm very sorry to have to say, that was an Irish landlord that did that, now.

Traveller Woman, Focus Group

This was attributed to the more multicultural nature of British society:

There used to be black and Asians and Chinese and them people would come in and out and mix and make with us and you felt so free.

Traveller Woman, Focus Group

Discrimination from the majority ethnic community had a negative effect on access to services. For example, participants recounted experiences of discrimination from the local authority. Experiences included having to wait significantly longer periods of time for home repairs, compared to members of the settled community:

The civic offices now. ... There's one part for the Travellers and the other part is for settled people. Now the gas breaks down, it'll take them a week or two to come fix it. We burnt out the new cooker up there, because we'd no heatin', We

had to leave it on to heat the house in the winter. ... You get no joy with them. ... They're advertising everyday that if there's anything wrong to ring us,. You can ring and ring how you like. And you get no joy. Now aul John up the way, a settled person like, soon as anything breaks belonging to him. And they're there in one hour after. You keep ringing and they say they'll be out tomorrow but they don't and you're left cold.

Traveller Man, Focus Group

Sure if you go down to the council there's a big sign down there, Travellers part, settled people over the other side, they separate them. They're keeping the Travellers and the settled people apart.

Traveller Man, Focus Group

Participants also shared a perception that positive relationships between the Traveller community and a representative of the local authority, such as a social worker, were actively discouraged by the local authority:

There used to be a man there a social worker and he was a good man. He was, this'll give you an indication of that man, now when he was dyin, he called for four young Travellers to carry his coffin from the church to the hearse and from the hearse to the grave. He was a settled man. You couldn't get better. But the corporation, they moved him out of there, he was getting too friendly with the Traveller see?

Traveller Man, Focus Group

You know if they get too attached to you, they could be shifted. They'd be shifted to Tallaght or whatever, you know the social worker. They're listening too much to you, and then they're moved on and there's a new person in and

you're starting off again with him. But that's the way the corporation works.

Traveller Man, Focus Group

Regarding health services, many participants shared very positive experiences of health services, perceiving a 'culture blind' approach in the delivery of health care:

Us three have attended the hospital now out in Blanchardstown. And they're very good now. The nurses and doctors. With health it doesn't make no difference whether you're a Traveller or whatever. There is foreign nurses out there and there's Irish nurses. There's foreign doctors and Irish doctors and they're all very good. You couldn't get better.

Traveller Man, Focus Group

I get tablets off Dr X. If I need anything, I get them. They're very nice in the pharmacy. The girls are very helpful. Give me everything I want.

Traveller Woman, Blanchardstown

However, some participants noted that they found themselves reliant on the willingness of an individual health professional, such as a GP, to provide care for them. Unlike the rest of the population, they felt that many GPs actively discriminate against Travellers:

Well, not every doctor takes on Travellers. Say like tomorrow morning if I say I'm going off my doctor now and that, well I might be looking around I mightn't get another doctor to take me on. ... Doctors can absolutely refuse you here, to see you and take you on.

Traveller Woman, Focus Group

If you have a doctor here, you've no other choice, you have to stay with that doctor. Even though it mightn't be that you want to be, well first of all he mightn't want you but moreover you mightn't want to be with that doctor.

Traveller Woman, Focus Group

Participants perceived a lack of understanding of Traveller culture and issues presenting to Traveller people, such as literacy problems and living standards, among health and social service providers. This led to an almost complete absence, in their experience, of intercultural competent service delivery. Health services, for example, were described as being 'provided by settled people, for settled people':

And that's what happens sometimes, when people go to hospital. They can't read or write, they could be late for their appointment, they mightn't get there until the following day, and if you go into that hospital, if you're dirty, which no one likes to go into dirty, the nurses and doctors don't know what that person came out of. They don't have an understanding. She doesn't know type of conditions we're forced to live in.

Traveller Woman, Focus Group

Within the health services or in government buildings no matter where, they should be more or less trained towards Travellers culture and know more about it, even in the schools or any place. If you don't know the background, well, I could be talking here for a year and a day, but unless you have a background in that person's culture, and where they're coming from. Now I can say I came in that bus this morning from Finglas, but that girl hasn't a clue, that's just an address to her, but what conditions are like for us she doesn't know, have I got water, have I got electricity, have I got a toilet, she doesn't know that.

Traveller Woman, Focus Group

3.2.1 Financial Exclusion

Exclusion from financial services was experienced by almost all participants. None of the participants of this study had a bank account at any stage of their lives. One reason perceived by participants was poverty:

I would [have a bank account] if I had anything to put into it. (laughs) I wouldn't use the credit union, I'd use the bank, if I'd anything to put into it. I'd want money to go into it of course. TW Not me anyway, sure I wouldn't have anything to put in it. Sure if we went into the bank they'd think we're nothing only to rob it. (laughs). Sure I'd have nothing to put in it.

Traveller Woman, Finglas

In addition to this, literacy issues formed a barrier to accessing financial services:

Well some of the forms I don't understand that's the truth. TW I wouldn't be able to sign a form. I'd have to put an x on it. ... I'd explain it to them, I'd say I can't read or write, I've no scholarship, I'll have to put an x on it.

Traveller Woman, Blanchardstown

Interestingly, this was not perceived as a barrier to accessing health services:

Ah no, I'd go down, you'd go down if ya needed something. No they're very good with us. Look the way you're brought up is the way you are. If you don't know how to read or write sure most of the time it doesn't worry ya. Know what I mean, like when your man says will you sign that all I can put is me initials. I put them down and he'll say that's alright, it's good enough.

Traveller Man, Focus Group

Another possible cause of financial exclusion was the limited sources of information and advice available to participants. All participants identified one or two trusted individuals or services they would access for information on health or other issues. There was a strong sense that generic/mainstream services, such as a citizen information centre, could not be accessed directly.

Yeah, you'd go to somebody in authority like, d'ya know, a teacher or a priest, They'd be your two dead hits to go to. There's a father P___ K___ over us now, anything that you need now, and he had a mate now, Sister P____, She'd recollect anything that you'd want to know, what you're entitled to, what you're not entitled to.

Traveller Man, Focus Group

They're good there in Pavee Point as well you know. They'll find out anything you want to know. If there's something you don't now you can ring them and they'll find out straight away, you know. If you get a letter and you can't understand it yourself, you know, you can ask them.

Traveller Man, Focus Group

3.3. A Changing Culture and Social Isolation

None of the participants referred to the issue of ageism regarding their contact with services. However, they did share a sense of being disregarded by younger members of their own community. This was attributed to significant changes that have occurred to the Traveller community over recent decades. As a result, older Travellers not only faced discrimination from the settled community, they also felt alienated from the rest of the Traveller population. They shared a strong sense of social isolation. When asked how he felt younger Travellers related to older Travellers, one participant noted:

Not as same as they used to for sure, not as same as they used to. No, they can't make no fist of them. They don't understand them anyway, you know. The young fella doesn't understand him, you know what I mean? You could have no chat with them in other words. ... He knows nothing ... and yet he knows too much for you [laughter].

Traveller Man, Focus Group

A sharp contrast was perceived between the lives of the two generations. In the views of participants, younger Travellers enjoy a better standard of living, reflected in higher education standards and greater employment opportunities:

A lot of young people can read and write now and do an awful lot of things that we couldn't do because, into the door of a school I never was. And I tell you I had four kids and I reared them here and they all went to school and they all got good schooling. That's one thing we didn't get.

Traveller Man, Focus Group

Well young fellas now today has it better. The young men and women has it better because why? The most of them has a few pound, they're never that badly stuck, if they want to buy something they mostly can go and buy it. And if they can't buy it this week, they'll buy it in a week or two anyway.

Traveller Man, Focus Group

Them all has fair aul jobs. They can get by easier. There's more opportunities there now for them, they've everything going for them.

Traveller Man, Focus Group

However, the life of younger Travellers was perceived to be lacking, in terms of Traveller culture. Through participants' discussion of the livelihood and living arrangements of their children, it emerged that it was perceived to belong to a very different culture to the one they grew up in. In particular, Traveller men lamented the demise of the nomadic aspect of their culture:

They have a better life. They get on better. I mean, I wouldn't like the life they have. I'd rather be out on the road but that's the new life.

Traveller Man, Focus Group

They don't know their own language, the Cant they call it, or the Gammon more people call it, because it's gone. They won't have a clue, They won't have a clue about Travellers. That's true as God.

Traveller Man, Finglas

I've an aul son there and he drives an aul lorry for some furniture man, do you know he'd to give two hundred pound for a thing to put on the front of the lorry (satellite navigation) and that tells him where to go to. If he was a right Traveller, he wouldn't want that. I could go any part of Ireland at all, I wouldn't want that thing.

Traveller Man, Focus Group

You be talking to them and the boys here would be telling them but they wouldn't have a clue what you'd be talking about you know. ... They wouldn't go travelling anyway that's the one thing. They wouldn't want to either. They wouldn't sleep in a wagon. They couldn't get on. They couldn't build a tent. They wouldn't know how to light a fire (laughter).

Traveller Man, Focus Group

Young people today, they're just working the way the settled people work today. They wouldn't have a clue about the old ways

Traveller Woman, Focus Group

Not only has recent changes to Traveller lifestyle, community and economic patterns brought with it a sense of alienation from younger Travellers it also represents alienation from the settled community. Experiences of discrimination described in

section 3.2 were in this sense new, as participants described a past in which Travellers were an accepted part of Irish society:

It wasn't only Travellers you met, you met an awful lot of settled country people that you knew as well as any Traveller.. And you'd like talking to them, ol' blacksmiths and carpenters and coopers, and stonemasons and you'd know where they were. –

Traveller Woman, Blanchardstown

You think of what we were, Travellers, we had nothing, the country people had nothing, never mind us, but in the very dark days in this country in the nineteen forties the rest of the world was starving, but we never seen one full days hunger, it was them that kept us. We got plenty of potatoes, plenty of milk. There was always a field of turnips and spuds. We never was like other places, other parts of the world. So, we could say nothing of the Irish people, could we, although we didn't have land, the one's that had it gave us. They looked after us. They looked after us well.

Traveller Man, Focus Group

I suppose there was more trust in the settled person, within the Traveller as well, you know what I mean. There was nothing going on at them times, the trust was there for us that the door could be open and we could standing on the floor and the woman could be out in the shed collecting the eggs or whatever, so there'd be more trust as well, and that. FG-W We were accepted, we were accepted travelling and at the side of the road, there was no fear in us. Where today if you went on even in a trailer and there was a space to pull in, you'd be afraid, you'd be afraid what'd happen to you.

Traveller Man, Focus Group

Participants described how in the past, they played a valued role in Irish society as members of the Traveller community. This was largely attributed to the Traveller economy, and the contribution it made to society in general:

The Traveller knew a lot more about the country than the country man (settled man) did, because I was talking to you and to him and a mile further to him and to him and I got a bit of each of your problems. If you weren't supposed to tell it and you didn't budge about it and if it was something that was of no harm, do you know this type of a way?

Traveller Man, Focus Group

A Traveller always had something to do, if you weren't picking spuds you'd be making buckets, you always had something you were at. You were always up in fairs and everything.

Traveller Man, Focus Group

Well in that time there wasn't any need for Pavee Point. Whatever you'd look for, you weren't going to get it but what people would give you. You'd get nothing. You might meet a decent man that would be a very rich man but you could do things for him and he'd do things for you, and help you.

Traveller Man, Focus Group

In addition, all participants were living in Traveller-specific accommodation – group housing and halting sites. Many, especially the men, shared the view that the nomadic part of Traveller life was inextricably connected to social interaction. Without it, opportunities to meet others had grown slim:

Ah I still miss the aul travelling, , it'd always come into me brain, the old road that'd be somethin', people'd be new,

now settled people I'm talkin' about you know, they were rare aul people, some of them.

Traveller Man, Finglas

All of these issues created a strong sense of social isolation among participants. Another contributing factor to social isolation was the death of a spouse. This was particularly an issue for Traveller women, many of whom had been highly dependent on their spouse for transport and opportunities for social interaction:

I do like to be moving around. When me husband was alive we used to go into town for the bit of shopping like. But now I don't. Not really able to walk now but that time I was able to walk. I was a flyer.

Traveller Woman, Blanchardstown

3.4 The Value of a Social Network for Older Travellers

In light of such significant change, it was unsurprising, if sobering, to find that most participants shared an intense perception that Traveller culture was dying out. This was augmented by the small number of older Travellers living in the area. When asked if they would like more opportunities to get together with older people, one participant shared his view that this was impossible, because in his view, there were no older Travellers left:

Ah if there was old people. When the old people was here, the parties an all. But there's none of them left sure. You'd enjoy the older people. This place a few year ago, you had your choice of them, they're all dead and gone now. You would when the old people was here but they're gone now.

Traveller Man, Focus Group

Others concurred, sharing a belief that in the near future the Traveller culture will have completely died away:

Around 20 years from now there'll be no Travellers. ... Well, the like of meself and the boys here, they won't be here anyway, 25, 30, we'll leave it at 25 year, they won't be here,

we'll be all dead. And children's getting reared now, my grandchildren now, sure they won't be Travellers. Everyone's grandchildren here now they won't be Travellers. There won't be a sign of Traveller in them people at all, there'll be no Travellers.

Traveller Man, Focus Group

Yet participants shared many rich stories of celebrations and Traveller culture from their own lifetimes:

I like the old time dancing, you see it on the television. ... The oul accordion players, Aye, now, you wouldn't see them no more. The aul accordion players, whistle players, around the campfire in that time. You'd be out on the road dancin'..and maybe some of the women could play accordians. There's Biddy Mohan, she was the best accordion player in the world. She must have been about 60 at the time, and could play accordion, playing all the reels, cork hornpipe, countyman's rambles, and what else, oh lord jesus I forget. She playin them, and her daughter playin the whistle and we dancing the whole time, then an aul sing song, all singing. Them days is gone.

Traveller Woman, Blanchardstown

That time you'd get maybe 10 or 12 families living on the one road and a few miles over you get another 10 or 12 families so you could go Ceilí-ing from one to another. Now there's literally nobody. They all left. And if they wouldn't be your brothers or sisters or, well you wouldn't have that many brothers or sisters I know, but they'd be all cousins and friends and second and third cousins and aunts and grand aunts you know that kind of thing.

Traveller Man, Focus Group

This indicates the strong value to be had in increasing opportunities for older Travellers to meet each other and share the same memories. The focus groups themselves were evidence of the beneficial effect of reliving old memories.

3.5 Conclusion

This exploratory study has shown that older Travellers face discrimination from the wider Irish society, leading to exclusion from many services. In addition, they are experiencing a strong sense of alienation from the rest of the Traveller community, due to the dramatic changes that have occurred to Traveller culture over recent decades, most notably the demise of the nomadic aspect of Traveller life and a decline in the old Traveller economy.

This has left older Travellers with the firm belief that when they die, Traveller culture will die too. In addition to this, individual participants shared the perception that there are virtually no older Travellers left besides them.

Chapter 4 – Survey Findings

Well some of the forms I don't understand that's the truth. I wouldn't be able to sign a form. I'd have to put an x on it. ... I'd explain it to them, I'd say I can't read or write, I've no scholarship, I'll have to put an x on it.

Traveller Woman, Blanchardstown

This chapter presents a profile of service providers in the Finglas and Blanchardstown area including an analysis of service provider's attitudes to Older Travellers.

4.1 Background.

Local service providers were invited to take part in a short quantitative survey. Although the number of respondents is too small to allow statistical inferences to be drawn or for any extrapolation in relation to general service provision, nevertheless important background information is provided.

Aims and Objectives

The aim of the quantitative data collection was to contextualise the qualitative analysis and to provide information regarding access and barriers to service provision for older Travellers. The survey had two objectives:

- to provide a profile of the current service provision in Finglas / Blanchardstown for older Travellers who live in the area,
- to document any barriers identified by service providers in responding to the needs of these service users.

A postal questionnaire was sent to service providers in the Finglas and Blanchardstown area. It was decided to use a postal questionnaire as the survey was covering two large geographical suburban areas. Data from the surveyed was analysed using statistical software and is largely descriptive.

Response Rate

Questionnaires were distributed to each service provider to be returned via post. To increase the number of responses, respondents were asked to return blank questionnaires where they felt the survey was not applicable to their organisation. Two younger Travellers conducted follow up telephone calls to prompt service providers to respond to the survey.

Of the initial 109 questionnaires, 69 were returned yielding an initial response rate of 63 per cent. Of these, 29 questionnaires were blank and 40 were completed, yielding a valid response rate of 37 per cent.

4.2 Results

The following sections present the results of the survey in detail:

4.2.1 Profile of Respondents

The number of service providers who responded to the questionnaire were split equally between Finglas (20) and Blanchardstown (20)

Fig 4.1 Location of Service Providers

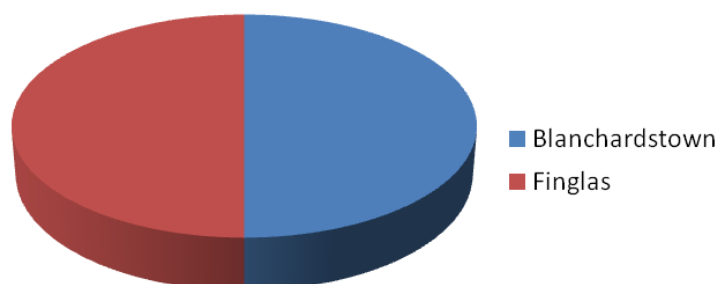


Fig 4.1

Almost all of the respondents from Blanchardstown were categorised as community / voluntary services. This contrasts sharply with Finglas, where half of the respondents fell into professional/ for-profit services category.

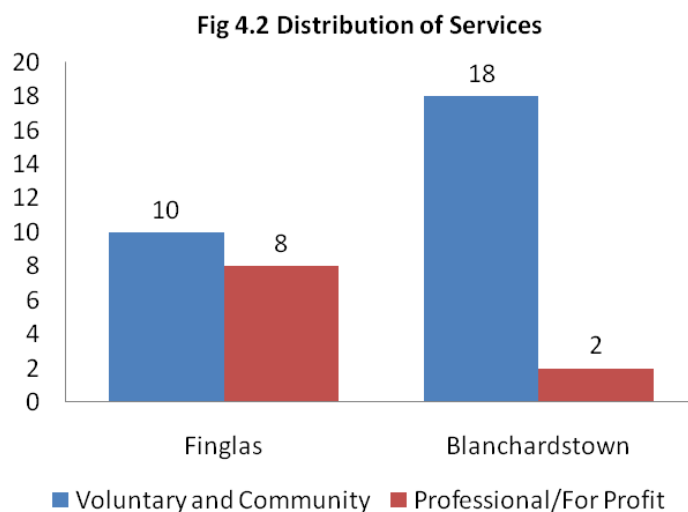


Fig 4.2.

The nature of the professional /for-profit service respondents from both areas was to provide statutory services to older people e.g. medical, pharmaceutical, other public service contracts. This contrasts sharply with Blanchardstown respondents that were almost exclusively community / voluntary based. It is also noteworthy that all but three of the respondents who returned blank questionnaires from both areas are categorised as professional for profit financial services suggesting that these organisations perceived little or no contact with older Travellers.

4.2.2 Older Travellers accessing services

Respondents were asked to rate how often they believed Older Travellers were accessing services on a regular basis. More than two thirds of respondents (28) indicated that they either rarely (20) or never (8) encountered older Travellers. A quarter of respondents believed that older Travellers sometimes accessed their services and these were mostly voluntary or community based organisations. Only 2 respondents indicated that Travellers often access their services and these respondents were exclusively voluntary or community based organisations

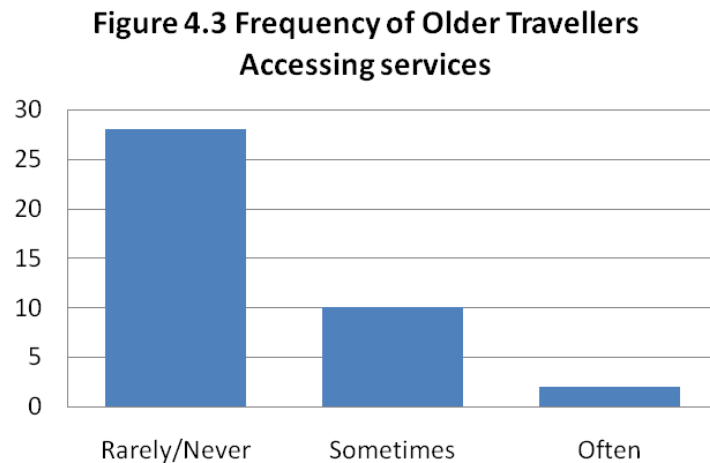


Fig 4.3.

4.2.3 Guidelines on social inclusion

Service providers were asked if they had written guidelines relating to the promotion of social inclusion in their service delivery. Half of the respondents indicated that they had written guidelines while just under half said they did not. Of those who answered no, three quarters indicated that written guidelines would be useful to their organisation.

4.2.4 Barriers to accessing services

Respondents were asked to identify any barriers that they thought might prevent older Travellers from accessing their organisation from the following list.

Poverty	Accommodation issues
Literacy	Lack of confidence
Health issues	Feelings of Isolation
Not aware of service	Lack of trust
Age	Unwilling / unable to attend alone
Fear of prejudice / discrimination	Will not mix with settled community
No interest in service	Do not feel they belong
Transport	

The three most common barriers believed to prevent Travellers themselves from accessing services were 1) older Travellers not aware of service, 2) older Travellers unwilling to attend alone and 3) literacy issues. Approximately a third of respondents believed that fear of prejudice / discrimination, lack of confidence and lack of trust were also important barriers

Figure 4.5 Barriers to Accessing Services

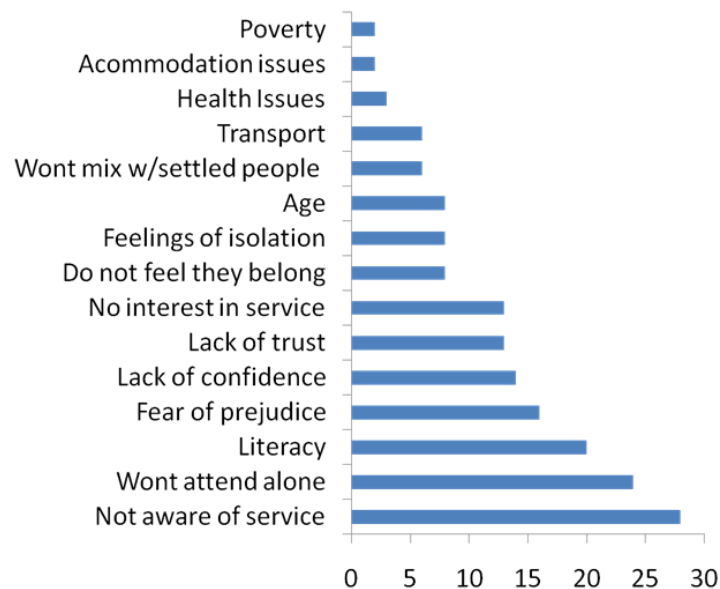


Fig 4.5.

When asked to rank these barriers in order of greatest impact, **Lack of Awareness of Services** again came out on top with almost half (18) the respondents identifying this category in their top ranked barriers. A third of respondents felt similarly about **Wont't Attend Alone** while a quarter identified **Literacy** as a major barrier. Other categories were roughly evenly divided with one or two mentions. Interestingly, no service

provider ranked either **Health** or **Accommodation** issues as major barriers to accessing service provision.

This comes despite the fact that both health and accommodation issues have been well documented as bearing a significant impact on the quality of life and well being of most Travellers. Similarly, health issues are regarded as significant barrier to mobility and quality of life among older people in general.

Many service providers appear to believe that older Travellers would be more likely to use services if they were aware of them. While it is not feasible to draw any particular conclusions from a sample such as this it is interesting that the services targeted for the survey were identified for inclusion in the survey by older and younger Travellers themselves.

4.2.5 Older Travellers as Service Users

Respondents where applicable, were asked to rate their organisations experience when working with older Travellers. A third (12) of respondents felt that their experience of service provision to older Travellers was **Very Good** while another third would relate their experience as generally **Good**. Only two respondents described their experiences as a mix of **Good** and **Bad** while 14 respondents either did not know or had little or no contact with older Travellers as previously stated.

Fig 4.6 Experience working with older Travellers

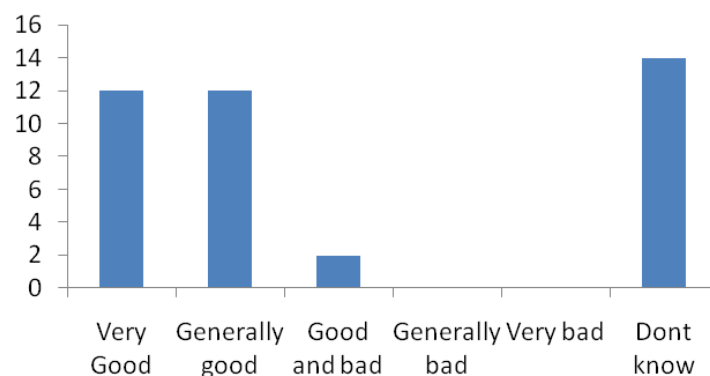


Fig 4.6.

When asked how well organisations would respond to an increase in the number of Older Travellers using the service all but two organisations said they would have no difficulty.

This is again an interesting finding given that at least a third of organisations felt that guidelines for social inclusion would be useful for the organisation. When asked how well other service users/clientele might respond to an increase in the number of older Travellers using their services, two thirds (26) felt that they would have no difficulty while one third felt that there would be some difficulty.

This suggests that at least some service providers may be aware of potential prejudicial attitudes among settled service users toward an increase Travellers using services.

4.2.6 Training

Respondents were asked if their organisation or staff would benefit from cultural awareness training / education on Traveller culture to help improve on service delivery. Just over a third (14) of respondents felt that they would benefit while a further third (14) were not sure. 12 respondents believed that they would not benefit further from this type of training

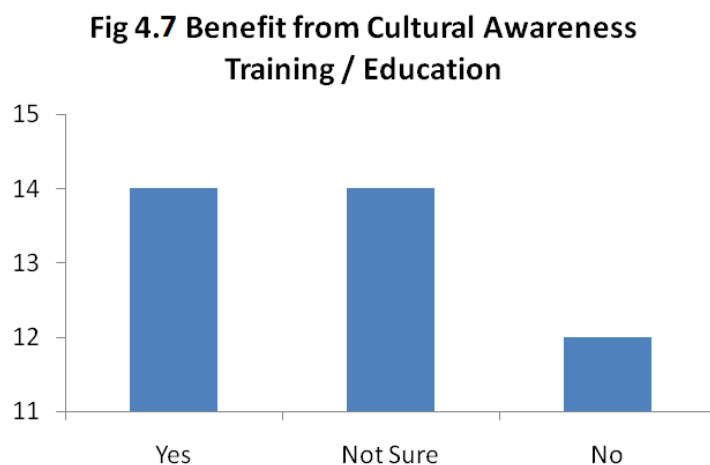


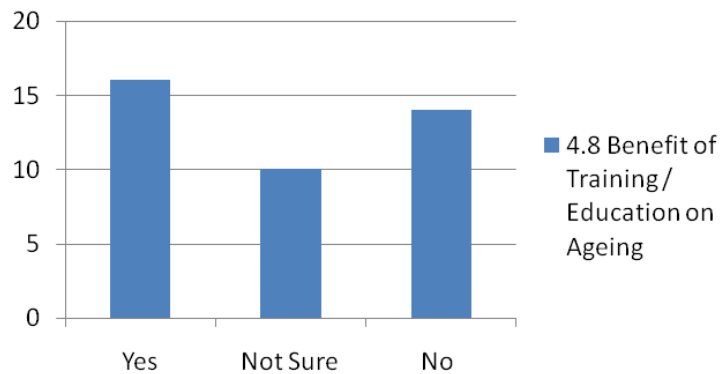
Fig 4.7.

Similarly, respondents were asked if they would benefit from training / education around ageing. More respondents (16) felt that this would be of use to staff while a quarter (10) of respondents was not sure. A third of respondents felt that training or education around ageing would not further benefit their organisation though a number of these organisations were already providing services aimed at older people.

4.3 Conclusion

This survey highlights a number of factors in relation to older Travellers and service provision in the Finglas and Blanchardstown area. A limited number of local services are linking in with older Travellers and these services are in the main, voluntary or community based services. This is not an unexpected result, even in such a small targeted sample. The experience of older Travellers as recounted in Chapter 3 suggests that Travellers are less likely to engage with professional / for profit services barring essential retail services such as groceries, fuel etc. Financial services, though targeted, were not adequately represented in the sample and suggest perhaps that they are not linking in well with older Travellers in the local area. Again this finding is not surprising given the level of financial exclusion experienced by Travellers and indeed, related by older Travellers themselves in chapter three.

Fig 4.8 Benefit of Training / Education on Ageing



In general service providers were as likely to have written guidelines on promoting social inclusion as not. It was equally encouraging that the vast majority of service providers felt that written guidelines would be useful where they did not exist. 2008 marked the year of intercultural dialogue and it is important that social inclusion measures aimed at promoting the inclusion of minority groups are inclusive of Travellers. It is important that organisations adopt a positive and inclusive approach towards providing services for older people. That organisations appear to concur is a very positive finding especially considering the potential dual discrimination of ageism and racism that older Travellers may experience in their everyday lives.

Respondents largely identified a lack of awareness of services as the single biggest barrier to accessing services. Literacy was also considered a factor. While it is important that service providers are active in reaching out to marginalised groups who may be at a disadvantage, promoting increased awareness of available services for older people could be a primary function of an older Travellers' network. Similarly, building capacity among older Travellers through information provision and literacy support should be a priority. Using the network to organise accompanying individuals who would rather not attend services alone would help older Travellers become familiar with services.

Contact with a marginalised or minority group will help break down barriers relating to prejudice and discrimination. While it is not feasible for all older Travellers to meet service providers, a perceived willingness on the part of service providers to accommodate older Travellers should provide a starting point for improved access. This, coupled with the positive attitude towards services and the settled community as related by older Travellers in chapter three should encourage service providers to include older Travellers in their client base.

Service providers were mixed on the need for further training and education on cultural awareness and ageing. A third of service providers were not sure if further training and education was required on Traveller culture and a similar number were unsure in relation to ageing. Such views merit more in depth research. While perceived cost, time and energy may be strong factors in limiting an organisations pursuit of further training or education, increased diversity and the need to promote greater social inclusion regarding services may be informing thinking among more providers who had previously overlooked this requirement.

Chapter 5 - Pilot Network Event

*You'd want to be doing something the way we used to be.
Mine, now, would be well used to me singing and going on.
That's my way, that's the way I know.*

Traveller Woman, Focus Group

5.1 Background

An important part of the project was to give expression to the needs and aspirations of older Travellers regarding their own culture and identity. It is quite evident from the qualitative research that older Travellers cherish a Traveller identity rich in social, communal, musical and artistic culture but who feel that much of the relevance of the old Traveller culture and traditions is being lost.

The Primary Health Care project in Pavee Point employs a number of Community Health Workers. Older Traveller women participated in both the project administration and the focus group interviews. In consultation with these women, a pilot network event was planned. Older Traveller women were keen to demonstrate the value of a network for older Travellers and expressed an interest in bringing older Traveller men and women together to share in song and story.

5.2 Dambé – The Mali Project

In July 2008, traditional Irish musicians Paddy Keenan and Liam O Maonlai were invited to visit Pavee Point with a group of nomadic musicians from Mali in West Africa. The invitation was in conjunction with the 'Dambé – The Mali Project' concert tour to promote the documentary film of the same title by Dearbhla Glynn. On the 24th July 2008, the day after a free concert in Meeting House Square, Temple Bar, Dublin 2 (23rd July), The Mali project including Paddy and Liam visited the offices of Pavee Point.

As part of the visit, the older Traveller women requested that they meet with the musicians as a pilot network event in an open and mutual exchange of culture and heritage. Paddy, Liam and the Mali project musicians were delighted to meet with the women, a meeting that focused on music and song. Paddy Keenan invited the women to participate in a 'Ceili', to relay songs and tell stories to the nomads. In return, the Mali musicians entertained the women with a lively mix of music, song and traditional African dance.

The older Travellers also relayed stories of hardship and discrimination of Travellers in Ireland. The Mali nomads recounted a very different experience to the Travellers and spoke of being valued as herders and traders in their native country. The role of the Mali nomads in the social and economic life of the Mali was reminiscent of the role that the older Travellers recounted from their youth. This exchange of views was later credited with giving the Traveller women a renewed sense of identity.

It's good when you hear that the settled people and the Travellers are getting on there. That's the way I'd look at it.

Traveller Woman, Focus Group

The women were particularly keen to meet with Paddy Keenan, the Traveller musician and famous uilleann piper. A secondary benefit of meeting Paddy is that Paddy is 58 years of age and considered an older Traveller himself. As a traditional Irish musician Paddy has travelled all over the world and would be one of the few famous Irish Travellers.

5.3 Conclusion

The Pilot Network Event was considered by all to be a great success particularly as 2008 is also the year of intercultural dialogue. The older women expressed a sense of empowerment after the event and were anxious to continue working together. The perception among the women was that the role of the network would encompass both a social and information exchange facility. One obvious limitation of the pilot network event was the notable absence of Traveller men. It had been hoped that the presence of Paddy Keenan would entice some of the men to attend the event but they continue to be a particularly difficult group of older Travellers to access.

Chapter 6 - Conclusion and Recommendations

The project focused on listening to the voice of older Travellers, the experience and attitudes of local service providers and the development of a pilot network project. The main themes emerging from the focus groups and interviews were discrimination and exclusion including financial exclusion, changes in culture, social isolation and the benefits of a strong social network.

These themes were common to most interviewees and reflect a collective experience among older Travellers in modern Ireland. The older Travellers ability to remain upbeat, positive or philosophical in the face of adversity was a stirring reminder of the resilience of the Traveller culture. This mood goes beyond the stoicism often attributed to older people and represents a will to preserve a level of identity and tradition while adapting to changing circumstances.

Recommendation

Travellers should be encouraged and resourced to establish a local network for older Travellers which could provide a space for older Travellers to preserve and develop social and cultural links, provide a valuable link to more isolated members of the community and facilitate an intergenerational discussion within the community..

The number of older Travellers linking in with local services seemed limited even if the number of older Travellers in the area was small. Services linking in with Travellers tended to be community or voluntary based services. Services were keen to develop or maintain policies around social inclusion and many would welcome further information and training around these areas. However services appeared to attribute lack of service utilisation to a general lack of awareness or literacy difficulties among Travellers while playing down the impact of health, accommodation and socio economic status.

Recommendation

The network should provide knowledge and assistance to service provider on how to further links with older Travellers and the Traveller Community. Cultural awareness and anti racism measures could be improved among service providers. Travellers could be informed of services and entitlements available to them. The network could act as a support mechanism for service utilisation among older Travellers.

The establishment of a pilot network project demonstrated older Travellers ability and willingness to engage in a network model for their own benefit. Travellers were able to both express themselves in a culturally appropriate manner and demonstrate their ability to develop a peer led network model.

Recommendation

Funding should be made available in support of a network for older Travellers in the Finglas and Blanchardstown area. This model should be peer led with support from local organisations and should be evaluated and developed as a model of good practice.



Pavee Beoirs and Glokes

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