



Note on the National Traveller and Roma Education Strategy (TRES) 2024/2030 and the TRES Plan for Implementation and Action 2024/2026

November 2024

Introduction

From the beginning in 1985 with a six month education programme which laid the basis for national Traveller initiatives and leadership Dublin Travellers Education and Development Group as Pavee Point was then known gave particular priority to education. Pavee Point Traveller and Roma Centre welcomes the first National Traveller and Roma Education Strategy (TRES) 2024/2030 and its associated Plan for Implementation and Action 2024/2026 as representing a reinforced commitment by the Dept of Education and the other Depts involved to Traveller and Roma education equality.

The purpose of this note is to provide brief information on the contents of the TRES and on plans for its implementation in 2024 – 2026 which might support the development of views and perspectives on the content of both and how engagement with them might be possible or useful.

The journey to TRES has been a long one and there is considerable distance to go on the road ahead to fully realise education rights for Travellers and Roma. This requires equality of access participation and outcomes for Travellers and Roma at all levels in an inclusive education system which is free from discrimination and racism, inclusion at all levels in the curriculum and at all levels in the education and early learning and childcare workforces. The TRES has gaps but names important issues and signposts some key actions which if implemented can provide support for the education ambition and determination which Travellers and Roma are rightly and increasingly demonstrating throughout the fields of education and training.

Background

The TRES was developed through a collaborative approach led by the Social Inclusion Unit of the Department of Education. A Traveller and Roma Education Strategy Advisory Group was established to guide, oversee and contribute toward strategy development. This group consisted of Traveller and Roma organisations, education stakeholders and departmental representatives across the Department of Education, Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, Department of Education and Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science.

Traveller and Roma organisations organised six consultations: four with the Traveller community and two with the Roma community and an independent report on these consultations was provided. A public online survey was launched in July 2023; and a social media campaign was run to increase awareness. In addition, the strategy drew upon research studies conducted in support of Equal Start concerning early learning and childcare and the National Action Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education (2022 – 2028).

Content

Strategic Goal

'Ensure equity of access, opportunity and outcomes, as well as meaningful participation, across the continuum of education for all Travellers and Roma, including people with additional educational needs, in an inclusive

system where Travellers and Roma are respected and supported to fulfil their potential, and where Traveller and Roma cultures and ethnic identities are acknowledged, visible and valued.' (TRES 2024-2030)

Values

TRES is underpinned by a set of core values to support decision making processes and prioritisation over the strategies' lifetime. These are:

- 1. Learner-centred:** Traveller and Roma children and young people will be supported and encouraged to participate meaningfully in decision-making that impacts them.
- 2. Collaborative:** This strategy will be delivered and evaluated in collaboration with Traveller and Roma communities and organisations.
- 3. Inclusive and respectful:** The strategy commits to addressing racism, promoting diversity, and creating learning environments where the unique identity and background of Traveller and Roma learners is acknowledged, respected and valued.
- 4. Accessible:** Since education is a human right, the strategy commits to ensuring that Traveller and Roma learners have the opportunity to participate positively in their educational journey where they are encouraged and supported to reach their full potential.
- 5. Positive outcomes:** The Departments involved commit to maintaining a focus on educational ambitions and positive outcomes for Traveller and Roma at all levels of education.
- 6. Accountable:** The strategy is committed to the development, review and evaluation of the implementation plans with the involvement of the Traveller and Roma organisations.

Strategic Pillars and Key Actions

The six-year strategy is built around four strategic pillars. Each with an associate goal, key actions and outcome. The four strategic pillars :

Pillar One: Participation and Experience: Seeks to improve the learning experience of Travellers and Roma across all levels of the education system.

Key Actions Summary

- **Participation:** Achieving equivalent rates of Travellers and Roma participation in inclusive, quality early learning and school-age childcare services. Facilitating the meaningful participation and inclusion of Traveller & Roma young people in monitoring the implementation of key policies and mechanisms such as the use of Reduced School Days, expulsions/suspensions, subject choice and exemptions, and the application of special education policies.
- **Promoting Diversity & Addressing Racism:** Supporting the professional development of early years practitioners and teachers to address and respond to needs associated with linguistic, socioeconomic, cultural and ethnic backgrounds of Traveller & Roma communities. In addition, ensuring the implementation of Cineáltas: Action Plan on Bullying and Bí Cineálta Procedures.
- **Curriculum:** Promote and encourage the participation of teachers and other members of the school community in targeted anti-racism and cultural awareness training. Progress the work by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) on supporting teaching and learning about Traveller culture and history within the curriculum.

Pillar Two: Access and Outcomes – Ensure equity of access, opportunity and outcome across the educational lifecycle for Travellers & Roma by creating an inclusive education system where they are supported to engage and fulfil their potential.

Key Actions Summary

- **Transitions:** Ensure Travellers & Roma are effectively supported in transitions throughout their educational journey, with a particular focus on transitions from primary to post-primary and retention within the Senior Cycle.

- **Literacy:** Resource schools to identify and respond to guidance needs of Traveller & Roma communities. In addition, supporting access to language and literacy supports, building upon initiatives piloted through STAR and implementing actions in line with the Literacy, Numeracy and Digital Literacy Strategy 2024-2030.
- **Wellbeing:** Foster greater well-being for Traveller & Roma children and young people through a whole-of-school approach that ensures they feel safe, connected, and supported in schools as outlined in the Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice.

Pillar Three: Partnership – Working across the education system through active collaboration and partnership with Traveller & Roma communities and organisations to support the successful delivery of the strategy.

Key Actions Summary

- **Family/Parents/Guardians:** Work in partnership with Traveller & Roma parents and guardians throughout the early learning and childcare journey, building trusting relationships to support children’s development and signpost wider support. Establish roles and structures to link services to families including Tusla Traveller Family Support Workers within Better Start and early learning care and school-age childcare. Building strong engagement with Traveller & Roma parents & Guardians through targeted accessible information and support and increasing good practice regarding language, literacy and digital literacy across the education system.
- **Collaborative Structures:** Develop structures that facilitate ongoing collaboration with Traveller & Roma communities and representative organisations in the development, implementation and monitoring of education policies, include the meaningful participation of Traveller & Roma young people in this process.
- **Addressing Disadvantage & Gender Inequality:** Resourcing schools to address educational disadvantage and socioeconomic barriers to education. Engage in research to identify barriers and enable Traveller & Roma women to access tertiary education and support across their educational journey.

Pillar Four: Delivering Change - Driving the strategies implementation through an evidence-informed framework monitoring progress and evaluating outcomes.

Key Actions Summary

- **Oversight & Implementation:** Establish a monitoring and evaluation framework with associated mechanisms, driven through oversight and governance structures. Co-ordinate implementation locally and nationally through the recruitment of relevant support structures and, work in partnership with Traveller & Roma communities and organisations.
- **Data Collection:** Through the Department of Education inspectorate ensure information relating to the strategy actions and the experiences of Traveller and Roma children and young people within the whole school climate and environment are available to inform annual planning. Support the development of data collection relating to the educational experiences of Traveller & Roma. Utilise a range of disaggregated and qualitative mechanisms to enhance decision-making, strategy implementation and further policy development.
- **Traveller & Roma Education Forum:** Establishment of a Traveller and Roma Education Forum to inform the review of progress and identify areas where further action, consultation, research and evaluation are required, and to facilitate consultation with members of the Traveller and Roma communities on matters across the education system.

Funding and Resources

An additional funding model will be rolled out on a targeted basis, this includes the provision of additional staff and targeted support services through Equal Start with a focus on those concerned with a higher concentration of marginalised children, including Travellers and Roma. This will see the introduction of new link workers and coordinator roles in early learning and care (ELC) and school-age childcare (SAC) settings. The identification of coordinator roles will support TRES implementation within the school sector. The TRES also names the intention to establish a permanent STAR coordinator to scale learnings from the pilot project and expand its associated communities of practice and ambassador programme.

Implementation

Implementation will be coordinated across government bodies, educational systems, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and Traveller & Roma communities. A Traveller and Roma Education Strategy (TRES) Oversight Group will be established to monitor implementation. This group will mirror the membership of the TRES Advisory Group and will have representatives from the three different education sectors, other relevant departments and agencies, and the Traveller and Roma organisations. A Traveller & Roma Education Forum will be established to ensure ongoing consultation with these communities

Monitoring, Evaluation and Accountability

Key to the success of the TRES is the development of a robust system to track and assess outcomes and identify areas for improvement. The Department of Education will take responsibility for oversight of the TRES with an annual report on its implementation, approved by the TRES Oversight Group, provided to the NTRIS Steering Committee which will also get updates on the ongoing TRES implementation progress. Progress reports will be developed and provided for approval by the TRES Oversight Group and published to the TRES webpage on www.gov.ie. Importantly, Traveller & Roma communities and organisations will be able to review progress and raise questions regarding its implementation. The TRES implementation plan will be reviewed every 2 years, with new actions being built upon through successive progress reviews.

Areas for Further Consideration

The TRES presents a comprehensive approach to addressing the barriers and challenges to Traveller & Roma participation and progression through the education system however, there are a number of challenges that may pose a risk to TRES effectiveness including:

- **Cultural Barriers:** Differences in cultural practices and values can create misunderstanding. Addressing these requires culturally sensitive approaches and ongoing dialogue.
- **Socio-economic Disparities:** Poverty and social exclusion are significant barriers that affect educational access and outcomes. The TRES must address these underlying issues through targeted support and interventions.
- **Sustainability:** Ensuring that the initiatives launched under the TRES are sustainable in the long term requires continuous political and financial support, as well as ongoing community involvement.
- **Resistance to Change:** Resistance from educational institutions or communities can slow the implementation of the TRES. Overcoming this requires strong leadership, advocacy, and the demonstration of early successes to build momentum.

Conclusion

The TRES represents a critical step toward enacting change to achieve educational equality for Travellers and Roma and seeking to address the specific education barriers and challenges they face. The success of the strategy relies on the commitment of all stakeholders—government, educators, communities, and families—to work together to create meaningful and lasting change.

TRES Plan for Implementation and Action 2024–2026:

Summary of table of Strategic Action listings (pages 9–48)

In the full Action Plan, details for each action are given in tables, with four column headings for every table:

Action for implementation	Timeline	Lead; Other stakeholders	Targets, outputs and indicators
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In the first column, each major Strategic Actions as listed in the TRES is followed by specific actions for its implementation. The other three columns relate to the final and very important section of the TRES -- driving implementation, monitoring progress, evaluating impact and reporting (pages 34-36 in TRES, 7-8 in the Action Plan):

- **Timeline:** from when an action starts, continues or is completed;
- **Lead; Other stakeholders:** this involves who takes the lead and/ are drivers of change e.g., Government Departments, local organisations, education providers, communities, families, learners;
- **Targets, outputs and indicators:** the focus of the change, and the identifiable results of the Action.

In the Action Plan, the four Pillar headings; participation and experience; access and outcomes; partnership and delivering change; and the associated Strategic Actions (numbered 1.1, etc.) match those in the TRES. In the Action Plan, the listings are further explained by naming the three relevant education levels: Early Learning and Childcare, Schools, and Tertiary.

In the Action Plan (not in the TRES), each major Strategic Action is followed by specific actions, designed to forward the Strategic Action’s overall implementation. Specific actions are numbered 1.1.1, etc. Below is a list of the major sections under each Pillar, in the TRES Action Plan:

Pillars and Sections	pages in the TRES Action Plan
<i>Pillar 1: Participation and experience</i>	10-19
1.1 Strategic Action for Early Learning and Childcare settings (ELC)	10-11
1.4 Strategic Action Schools	12-18
1.8 Strategic Action for Tertiary	19
<i>Pillar 2: Access and outcomes</i>	20-29
2.1 Strategic Action ELC	20-21
2.3 Strategic Action Schools	21-26
2.8 Strategic Action Tertiary	27-29
<i>Pillar 3: Partnership</i>	30-40
3.1 Strategic Action ELC	30-32
3.3 Strategic Action Schools	33-38
3.7 Strategic Action Tertiary	39/40
<i>Pillar 4: Delivering change</i>	41-48
4.1 Strategic Action ELC	41/42
4.2 Strategic Action Schools	43-48

The following is the action plan overview of the full contents of the first column that is the action for implementation for each section, and for most of these there is a short explanatory comment.

Pillar 1: Participation and experience (pages 10-19)

Improve the learning experience of Travellers and Roma at all levels of the education system.

1.1--1.3 Strategic Action for Early Learning and Childcare settings (ELC) (pages 10-11)

1.1 Work towards equivalent rates of young Traveller and Roma children participating in inclusive, quality ELC and school-age childcare (SAC) services to the same level as the general population through the Equal Start funding model and its associated universal and targeted actions.

1.1.1 Diversity, equality and inclusion (DEI) guidelines, resources and training.

1.1.2 Track Traveller and Roma children's participation in ELC to best use the already established ethnic identifier and other related data systems.

1.2 (p.11) Ensure every Traveller and Roma young child experiences a high-quality, warm, welcoming, inclusive ELC environment that is culturally and linguistically prepared to welcome the child and family.

1.2.1 Inclusion coordinator -- Embed inclusion within Equal Start settings

1.3 (p.11) Strengthen the capabilities of early years educators and school-age childcare practitioners to address and respond to diversity and to meet learning and care needs associated with the linguistic, socioeconomic, cultural and ethnic backgrounds of those from the Traveller and Roma communities.

1.3.1 Appoint early years specialists

1.4--1.7 Strategic Action Schools (pages 12-18)

1.4 (p.12/14) Continue to strengthen inclusion and cultural awareness, and address racism in our schools including through teacher professional learning, implementation of the Cineáltas: Action Plan on Bullying and Bí Cineálta Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour, and through the Intercultural Guidelines for schools.

1.4.1 Intercultural Guidelines

1.4.2 Initial Teacher Education: inclusive education

1.4.3 Teacher Professional Learning: inclusion and diversity

Strengthen the capabilities of early years educators to address and respond to diversity and to meet learning and care needs associated with the linguistic, socioeconomic, cultural and ethnic backgrounds of those from the Traveller and Roma communities.

1.4.4 promote diversity in teaching workforce

1.4.5: promote diversity in SNA workforce

1.4.6 Wellbeing inspections and promoting diversity

1.4.7 Online safety --- information for parents, guardians, orgs and communities

1.5 (P15) Progress the work by the NCCA on supporting teaching and learning about Traveller culture and history within the curriculum, including providing supports for the Traveller community to assist in the development of relevant material for schools. Promote and encourage the participation of teachers and other members of the school community in targeted cultural awareness training.

1.5.1 & 1.5.2: Traveller culture and history in the curriculum

1.5.3 Teacher professional learning ... cultural awareness

1.6 (p.16-17) Ensure a focus on meaningful participation by Traveller and Roma young people, including by monitoring the implementation of key policies and mechanisms such as the use of reduced school days, expulsions and suspensions, subject choice and exemptions, and application of special education policies, as these apply to Traveller and Roma children and young people.

- 1.6.1 Reduced school days
- 1.6.2 English as an Additional Language [Roma]
- 1.6.3 Senior Cycle redevelopment
- 1.6.4 Data on expulsions
- 1.6.5 Suspensions and expulsions
- 1.7 (P18) Encourage and support Traveller and Roma children and young people to participate in extracurricular activities including Creative Youth programmes, homework clubs and other related activities.
 - 1.7.1 and 1.7.2: pilot STAR creative initiatives
 - 1.7.3 Homework clubs

1.8 Strategic Action for Tertiary (page 19)

1.8 Support Traveller and Roma students in accessing tertiary educational opportunities and work to ensure that students have a positive and welcoming experience.

- 1.8.1 Raise awareness of Traveller and Roma culture and history
- 1.8.2 Promote a more diverse teacher workforce by supporting equity of access, participation and success in initial teacher education for Traveller and Roma students
- 1.8.3 Inclusion, equity and diversity in higher education institutions

Pillar 2: Access and outcomes (pages 20-29)

Ensure equity of access, opportunity and outcome for Travellers and Roma to fulfil their potential through our education system

2.1-2.2 Strategic Action ELC (pages 20-21)

2.1 Ensure Traveller Roma children will experience effective transitions where they feel valued, actively supported and nurtured, at the start and through their early learning and care experience and on to school.

- 2.1.1 Inclusive admissions policy
- 2.1.2 National model of transitions
- 2.2 Ensure Traveller and Roma children have access to additional supports for language and literacy attainment in line with actions in the Literacy, Numeracy and Digital Literacy (LNDL) Strategy 2024 – 2033.

2.2.1 Language, literacy and numeracy. LNDL Strategy, Little Library, Early Talk...

2.3--2.7 Strategic Action Schools (pages 21-26)

2.3 Build on the success of the literacy initiatives piloted in the STAR pilot project to support Traveller and Roma children and young people to develop their literacy competency, and implement the actions in Ireland's LNDL Strategy 2024-2033, particularly those that target the Traveller and Roma communities, including parents and guardians from those communities.

- 2.3.1 STAR literacy project
- 2.3.2 Research – digital divide
- 2.3.3 LNDL Strategy implementation
- 2.4 (p.22/23) Support Traveller and Roma children and young people at the transition points of our education system. In particular, focus resources on transitions to postprimary school and progression and retention ... into and through Senior Cycle and to the Leaving Certificate examination. Provide guidance to and support and encourage schools to identify the specific guidance-related needs of the Traveller and Roma communities and include strategies to meet the specific needs of this cohort within the whole-school guidance plan.

2.4.1 Transition supports

2.4.2 Role model and mentoring

2.4.3 Inclusive guidance

2.5 (p.24) Expand data collection systems to enable monitoring of attendance patterns for Traveller and Roma children and young people in our schools. Informed by the data, take affirmative action in partnership with Tusla Education Support Service (TESS), schools and the Traveller and Roma communities, including Traveller and Roma organisations, to address poor attendance and support children and young people to reengage and stay engaged.

2.5.1 Attendance [5-year improvement plan]

2.5.2 Attendance data

2.5.3 Transport

2.6 (p.25) Support schools working to ensure that their admission policies are compliant with all aspects of the Education (Admission to Schools) Act 2018, including with regard to non-discrimination, and ensure awareness of parents and guardians in the Traveller and Roma communities around school admissions, including rights and obligations.

2.6.1 School admissions information

2.7 (p.26) Support Traveller and Roma children and young people's wellbeing through further implementation of the Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice, which promotes a whole-school preventative approach so that children, young people and staff experience a sense of belonging and feel safe, connected, heard and supported in our schools.

2.7.1 & 2 Wellbeing

2.7.3 Trauma-informed training

2.8 Strategic Action Tertiary (pages 27-29)

2.8 (p27-29) Provide flexible and responsive learning opportunities that support Traveller and Roma students across the tertiary education system.

2.8.1 Ensure Traveller and Roma students with disabilities, who have the greatest level of need, have access to the greatest level of supports (National Disability Strategy)

2.8.2 Improve communication on literacy and numeracy supports

2.8.3 Common learner details form

2.8.4 Youthreach

2.8.5 Transition supports from further education and training

2.8.6 Safe and inclusive higher education campuses

2.8.7 Accommodation

2.8.8 Apprenticeships

Pillar 3: Partnership (pages 30-40)

Working together across the system and with the Traveller and Roma communities, including Traveller and Roma organisations, to support the delivery of this strategy

3.1--3.2 Strategic Action ELC (pages 30-32)

3.1 (p.30/31) Work with Traveller and Roma parents and guardians as partners in their children's ELC journey and utilise these opportunities to build trust as the primary partner in children's development and signpost families to wider supports inside and outside of ELC.

3.1.1 Family link worker. Connecting families to services

3.1.2 Support partnership with parents to ensure parental involvement in settings

3.1.3 Accessible communications

3.2 (p.32) Develop roles and structures, including Tusla Traveller Family Support workers, to link families to services and roles within Better Start and early ELC and SAC services to link services to families.

- 3.2.1 Family and community partnership coordinator
- 3.2.2 Collaboration with communities
- 3.2.3 Collaboration across education

3.3--3.6 Strategic Action Schools (pages 33-38)

3.3 Develop structures to facilitate ongoing collaboration with Traveller and Roma communities and organisations in the development, implementation and monitoring of education policies. Ensure the meaningful participation of Traveller and Roma children and young people in the development, implementation and monitoring of education policy. Encourage and support engagement between schools and Traveller and Roma parents and guardians, organisations and communities.

3.3.1 Participation in policy

3.3.2 Participation of children and young people

3.4 (p.34/35) Ensure a focus on effective engagement and communication between the education system and the Traveller and Roma communities and organisations, through providing targeted, accessible information resources on the education system and related supports and developments. Support strong engagement with Traveller and Roma parents and guardians, including through targeted supports and increasing awareness and good practice with respect to language, literacy and digital literacy across the system.

3.4.1 TRES feedback

3.4.2 Information series [on education matters and policies]

3.4.3 TRES website & TRES information

3.4.4 Communities of practice

3.5 (p.36) Provide resources to all schools to address educational disadvantage and to address the cost of school for all families through universal supports; continue work on the review of resource allocation to schools for students at risk of educational disadvantage and carry out the work arising from the review. Continue to provide extra capitation for schools with Traveller enrolments and continue to include Traveller and Roma enrolments in the DEIS identification model.

3.5.1 OECD review and recommendations

3.6 (p.37/38) Build on and apply existing information and knowledge around Traveller and Roma education including that gained through the development of this Strategy and the evaluation of the STAR pilot project. Carry out further research, consultation and evaluation as required. Ensure a focus on identifying and sharing good practice.

3.6.1 TRES reports

3.6.2 Literature review

3.6.3 Mapping projects [national scoping]

3.6.4 STAR initiatives webpage

3.6.5 Digital resource pack

3.7 Strategic Action Tertiary (pages 39/40)

3.7 Through research, identify the barriers and enablers for Traveller and Roma women accessing tertiary education and consider how to support Traveller and Roma women on their educational journey.

3.7.1 Supports for Traveller and Roma women in tertiary education

3.7.2 Research development

3.7.3 Transition supports from further to higher education

3.7.4 Information sharing

3.7.5 Continued collaboration

3.7.6 Partnerships between educational institutions and community organisations

Pillar 4: Delivering change (pages 41-48)

Drive the implementation of this strategy and implementation plan, monitor progress and evaluate.

4.1 Strategic Action ELC (page 41/42)

4.1 Working through the Equal Start funding model and Oversight Group, develop and deliver universal and targeted supports through an extensive system of implementation, monitoring and evaluation and report on progress through the TRES process. A dedicated Equal Start project team within the DCEDIY will lead on Equal Start

4.1.1 Provide additional funding/ support for Equal Start target settings

4.1.2 Wider use of the Equal Start identification model

4.1.3 Implementation, monitoring and evaluation of Equal Start

4.1.4 Implement the Traveller and Roma Early Education Strategy

4.2–4.6 Strategic Action Schools (pages 43-48)

4.2 (p.43) Establish a Traveller and Roma Education Forum to inform the review of progress and identify areas where further action, consultation, research and evaluation are required, and to facilitate consultation with members of the Traveller and Roma communities on matters across the education system.

4.2.1 Traveller and Roma Education Forum

4.3 (p.44) Establish an oversight and governance structure to actively drive the implementation of the strategy and the implementation plan. Establish a monitoring and evaluation framework and reporting mechanisms, including reporting to the NTRIS committee.

4.3.1 TRES monitoring and oversight

4.3.2 TRES monitoring and evaluation framework

4.4 (p.45) Through the Department of Education's Inspectorate, gather information about the key actions of this Strategy relating to the experiences and outcomes of Traveller and Roma children and young people and the whole-school climate and environment. Ensure data on the numbers of Traveller and Roma children and young people are available to the Inspectorate to inform its annual planning processes.

4.4.1 School inspections

4.5 (p.46/47) Recruit appropriate personnel and establish support structures to coordinate and drive implementation at a national and local level, including working with schools, the Traveller and Roma communities and organisations, and the wider community as appropriate.

4.5.1 National coordinators

4.5.2 STAR coordinator

4.5.3 Community link workers

4.5.4 STAR Working Group

4.6 (p.48) Continue to develop the range of data related to Traveller and Roma education that is collected, analysed and published, with a focus on making data publicly available where it is used for decision-making; increasing the range of disaggregated and qualitative data that is captured; increasing data-sharing between departments and agencies; enhancing the collection of ethnicity data; and analysing more data to assist in monitoring progress; understanding trends, particularly relating to attendance and retention; and designing policy interventions.

4.6.1 Publish more disaggregated data:

4.6.2 Take measures to improve the Department's capture of ethnicity data.