



Eastern Region Traveller
Health Unit

Annual Report 2023



PAVEE POINT
TRAVELLER AND ROMA CENTRE



HE



PAVEE PEU

A collection of recipes and stories
by Traveller Women

Logo for SOLAS HE and other organizations.

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Chairperson's Foreword

I am delighted to introduce the 2023 annual report on behalf of the Eastern Region Traveller Health Unit (ERTHU). In 2022, we saw the publication of the long awaited National Traveller Health Action Plan and our work in 2023 has been to bring this plan to life. The members of the ERTHU are actively focused on implementing the recommendations from the plan to improve the quality of life and access to services for members of the Traveller Communities.

Our 2023 annual report clearly demonstrates the breadth, depth and innovative nature of the work undertaken by all Traveller Health Projects and organisations throughout the region in partnership with our colleagues in the HSE. It is only through continued integrated and collaborative working will we continue to realise and deliver the ambitions of the National Traveller Health Action Plan. The only measure of success is when members of the Travelling Community believe this plan has positively impacted on their lives.

Our report sets out the progress which has been achieved under various initiatives in particular mental health services for all members of the Travelling Community and their general health and wellbeing. It is also an opportunity for me to highlight again the invaluable work undertaken on a daily basis by the Traveller Primary Care Health Workers. These staff are the foundation stone for the delivery of all other work undertaken by the ERTHU. They are an invaluable link and help develop relationships of trust and improve access to services for Travellers. A key priority for 2024 is to ensure our Primary Care Health Workers continue to be supported, trained and valued to undertake their roles.

2023 was also a challenging year for the Travelling Community within the Eastern Region and despite the work of so many people, bereavements and suicides continue to have a significant impact across communities.

I wish to acknowledge the work of Ms. Martina Queally, Regional Executive Officer - Dublin and South East for her tireless commitment to addressing the inequalities that exist in the provision of services to members of the Traveller community. Martina served as Chair of the Eastern Traveller Health Unit for many years.

Finally, I wish to extend my sincere thanks and gratitude to my colleagues on the ERTHU and every member of all the Traveller Health Projects and Workers for their ongoing work. Your important contributions are much appreciated and I look forward to building on the progress achieved to date in 2024.

Mellany McLoone

Chair: Eastern Traveller Health Unit



Who We Are

The Eastern Region Traveller Health Unit (ER THU) works across three Community Health Organisations (CHO) – CHO 6, 7 and 9 – and 34 Community Health Networks. The ER THU works to prioritise Traveller health concerns and address Traveller health inequalities on behalf of the Health Service Executive (HSE). THUs are an effective mechanism in which Traveller health inequalities can be addressed; they are an essential mechanism in which health services are delivered effectively to Travellers and Traveller health issues are mainstreamed into general health policy and service provision.

There are currently seven THUs across Ireland working in partnership with local Traveller organisations/Traveller Primary Health Care Projects (PHCTPs). The THU Terms of Reference are clearly outlined in ER. 4 in the 1995 *Report of the Task Force on the Travelling Community*:

- Monitor the delivery of health services to Travellers and to set regional targets against which performance may be measured.
- Ensure that Traveller health is given due prominence on the agenda of the HSE.
- Ensure coordination and liaison between the HSE and other statutory and voluntary bodies, in relation to the health situation of Travellers.
- Collect data on Traveller health and utilisation of health services.
- Ensure the appropriate training of health service providers in terms of their understanding of and relationship with Travellers.
- Support the development of Traveller-specific services, either directly by the HSE or indirectly through funding appropriate voluntary organisations.

HSE staff and Traveller organisations/PHCTPs are integral to the work and function of the THUs. As a general principle, membership of each THU comprises of equal HSE and Traveller organisation/PHCTP representation – this partnership approach is regarded as crucial in supporting a collective, coordinated approach to addressing identified, agreed priorities.

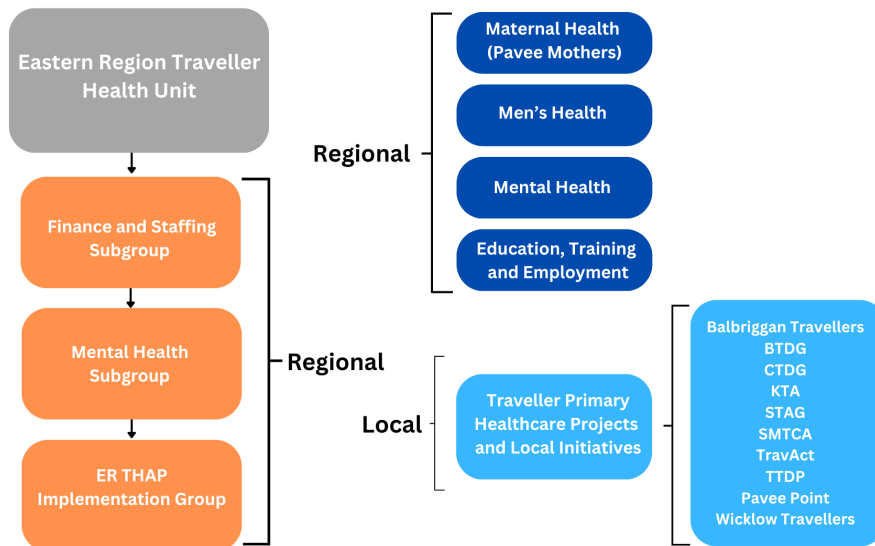
As the first established and one of largest THU in the country, the ER THU work with approximately 8,200 Travellers or 26% of the total Traveller population in Ireland. The ER THU is coordinated by Pavee Point Traveller and Roma Centre on behalf of the HSE and provides overall technical support, including:

- Overall ER THU coordination
- General administrative support to ER THU, including:
 - Organising meetings/arranging venues/draft agendas
 - Recording of minutes and distribution of same
 - Development of regional priorities
 - Providing information/reports on ER THU activities to the Department of Health and Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration & Youth
- Administrative and technical support to ER THU sub-groups
 - Financial support to ER THU
 - Development of funding criteria and application process
 - Coordination and support to ER THU Finance & Staffing subgroup
 - Preparation of budgets and accounts
 - Monitoring of payments and accountability
 - Providing updates and information to Traveller organisations in relation to governance
- Providing analysis and technical support and advice on Traveller issues and Traveller health developments
- Technical support and advice on Primary Health Care to PHCTP in ER THU and nationally
 - Providing support and advice to Traveller organisations in developing PHCTPs (sharing information on current work being undertaken; providing strategic advice and information on the policy context; supporting the writing of funding proposals; employment of Travellers etc.)
 - Providing updates on any new developments in the Companies Office as well as the Charities Regulator's office around Corporate Governance
- Co-ordinate the production of annual reports
- Organising events e.g. launches, meetings, training, etc.
- Undertake media work for ER THU
- Commissioning and editing research reports
 - Managing research projects (convening and supporting steering groups; liaising with researchers; organising focus groups; editing reports etc.)
- Representing the ER THU on national fora
- Supporting and resourcing the ERTHN
- Provide information to relevant HSE staff within CHO 6, 7 and 9 on the work of the THU

The ER THU work plan is implemented through regional THU initiatives, including ten Traveller projects which comprises nine peer-led local Traveller Primary Health Care Projects (PHCTPs) and a local health initiative. The

nine PHCTPs employ up to 88 staff, including Traveller Community Health Workers who work on a part-time basis (12 hours per week) undertaking health advocacy in a range of health arenas (e.g. health education; child and infant health; immunisation and health alerts; addiction; diet and exercise; health and well-being; women's health; men's health; mental health; and social determinants work including accommodation and environmental health issues, etc.). The ER THU has a clear track record of achievement in enhancing Traveller health status, improving the capacity of mainstream health services to respond to Traveller needs, and responding to the social determinants that are at the root of Traveller health inequalities.

Eastern Region THU Structures



ER THU Approach



In 2023, the ER THU was chaired by Chief Officer Martina Queally, Community Healthcare East representing the Chief Officers across the three CHOs. The THU has representation from PHCTP representatives across the region in addition to senior level HSE representatives, including Heads of Service. These HSE representatives represent both their geographic area and as their care group from each directorate (Mental Health, Primary Care, Nursing, HR, Health and Well-Being, Social Inclusion).

There are several subgroups of the ER THU, including:

a) Finance & Staffing Subgroup

The purpose of this subgroup is to facilitate any necessary discussions and considerations of financial management. Furthermore, it provides a distinct space from the main ER THU to discuss any emerging concerns with respect to staff, including recruitment and retention.

b) Mental Health Subgroup

This subgroup was established as a targeted response to the ongoing mental health crisis within the Traveller community. The subgroup undertakes a regional coordinated response, while also contributing nationally to information policy and service development. In 2023, the Mental Health Subgroup supported several coordinated responses to critical incidents, including suicides, involving Travellers in the Eastern Region. The subgroup also began work on a regional critical response plan to inform a standardised approach to any critical incident that could significantly impact the mental health of Travellers in the Eastern Region.

c) Education, Training & Employment Subgroup

The purpose of this subgroup is to monitor the ongoing progress of the Traveller Higher Education and Employment pilot initiative. The initiative developed by Pavee Point, ER THU, the HSE and the Department of Applied Social Studies in Maynooth University (MU). The key aim of the initiative is to promote Traveller participation in higher education and to support Traveller employment opportunities within the HSE. The Bachelor of Social Science (Community and Youth Work) part-time in-service programme is a four-year professional qualification in Community Development and Youth Work endorsed by the All-Ireland Endorsement Body for Community Work Education and Training and the North-South Education and Training Standards in Youth Work. The key aim of the initiative is to promote Traveller participation in higher education and to support Traveller employment opportunities within the HSE.

There are also several key networks of the national, regional, and local Traveller health infrastructure that the ER THU plays an active role in coordinating and participating in. These include, the National Traveller Health Advisory Forum, the National Traveller Health Network, and the Eastern Region Traveller Health Network.

d) In 2023, the ER THU established a subgroup to oversee the development and implementation of the ER NTHAP. See page 9.

National Traveller Health Advisory Forum (NTHAF)

The NTHAF comprises HSE staff, coordinators from the seven THUs Coordinators, Traveller organisation/PHCTP representatives from regional Traveller health networks, and representatives from national Traveller organisations. The NTHAF advises on key priorities for Traveller health and provides supports for Traveller health planning, delivery, and monitoring.

ER THU Representation and Engagement, 2023:

ER THU staff attended five NTHAF meetings in 2023.

National Traveller Health Network (NTHN)

The NTHN is a national forum for PHCTPs throughout Ireland. The NTHN provides a strong forum for the exchange of information on current and new policy developments and updates on health reforms and the implications related to Traveller health. The network also identifies any emerging issues, shares insights and learning, and identifies models of good practice.

ER THU staff attended and supported the organisation of four NTHN meetings in 2023.

Eastern Region Traveller Health Network (ERTHN)

ERTHN is a regional forum for the projects in CHO6, 7 and 9. It provides as an essential point of contact for projects to share local emerging needs, identify trends, and developing collective responses including regional and national resources.

ER THU staff attended and supported the organisation of six ERTHN meetings in 2023.

The ER THU provides technical support to projects in the Eastern Region. This includes supporting local PHCTP Steering Groups and providing expertise and advice. Qualitative visits are organised on an annual basis to each PHCTP, and further support or training.

Regular meetings with projects, including with Coordinators, are also convened through the ERTHN, providing projects with key policy updates and the opportunity to share information, including challenges locally/regionally which supports collective action in addressing these issues, providing added value. External inputs are facilitated where needed.





Key Highlights in 2023

Eastern Region Traveller Health Action Plan

The most significant achievement in 2023 was the development of the Eastern Region Traveller Health Action Plan. Following the launch of the National Traveller Health Action Plan (NTHAP) in December 2022, the ER THU established a subgroup to lead on the development of a regional THAP. The ER NTHAP Implementation subgroup met 10 times during the period January 2023 – May 2023 to develop the regional plan, with the support of a consultant who was employed to support the process and write-up. The Action Plan will be officially launched in 2024.

The Eastern Region Traveller Health Unit NTHAP 2022-2027 Implementation Subgroup set out to:

- Oversee the development of the ER THU wide NTHAP Implementation Plan
- Coordinate planning activities in the development of the Plan
- Engage and inform relevant staff in the process of developing the plan in a timely manner
- Prepare and collate information to assist in developing the Plan
- Oversee the tender process for hiring specialised planning support including facilitators and consultants
- Facilitate active participation and engagement with Travellers and Traveller representatives in the development of the Plan
- Report to the ER THU on activities
- Finalise and publish the ER THU wider NTHAP implementation Plan
- Set up the relevant structures/mechanisms for implementing the Plan, with ownership of actions clearly assigned and reporting lines agreed
- Monitor and keep under review implementation of the Plan

a) Methodology to Develop the Regional THAP

Several methodologies were explored to support the ER THU sub-group and a three-pronged approach was proposed and adopted:

1. Engagement with projects and ERTHU regional health initiatives in the planning process to collectively identify priority actions.



2. Engagement with HSE staff in the planning process to identify priority actions both locally and regionally Information from the two processes would be managed by an external facilitator who would collate the material and draft a discussion document for a joint workshop.
3. Joint workshop with the HSE and the Traveller representatives to consider draft document and finalise actions and associated deliverables.

It was agreed that:

- The THU (via the Eastern Region Traveller Health Network (ERTHN)) would support the 10 Traveller projects across the region to collectively prioritise regional actions and activities and identify key actions in relation to development of the regional plan.
- HSE staff would scope NTHAP actions and formulate local CHO based and ER THU-wide actions with related deliverables.
- A joint workshop would be held with HSE staff and Traveller representatives to discuss and agree final ER THU wide NTHAP actions and deliverables.
- An ER THU wide plan would be collated based on final agreed actions and deliverables. The Plan would be costed and include annual priorities, indicators, timescale etc.
- A regional proposal for once-off funding (for the three CHOs) would be submitted to Genio based on actions identified in the Eastern Region NTHAP Implementation Plan.

Initial engagement with all key stakeholders in identifying actions for the Plan comprised internal discussions and self-assessment with (1) the HSE and (2) Traveller organisations/PHCTPs. Discussions also took place at CHO level and regionally across the CHOs on the development of actions amongst HSE and PHCTPs.

b) Stakeholder Engagement

The planning process was underpinned by a robust collaborative, partnership approach which facilitated co-design of actions to deliver on the NTHAP at a regional level. Several workshops were organised with Traveller Projects (x10) and HSE staff including:

- Workshop with Traveller Projects including Coordinators of Primary Health Care for Travellers Projects (PHCTPs) and Traveller Community Health Workers to identify key issues for Travellers regionally – 1st February 2023 (9 projects)
- Follow up workshops x 2 with Traveller Projects including Coordinators to further explore issues identified and possible initiatives to address them which align with the NTHAP.

- Briefing session with HSE staff (online with over 60 participants)
- Planning Workshop with Traveller Projects (9 projects, over 20 participants, 4 breakout groups (including future thinking scenario planning through role play and prioritising actions))
- Planning Workshop with HSE staff (online with over 60 participants, 6 thematic breakout groups)
- Preparatory meeting with Traveller Projects (pre joint event - 8 projects)
- Joint Planning Workshop with Traveller projects and HSE staff (over 60 participants, 9 goal focused breakout groups discussions)
- Feedback meeting with Traveller Projects (6 projects).

Briefing materials were also prepared and shared with participants in advance of the workshops. These included information briefing notes at initial stage as well as workshop presentations. After each workshop, following an iterative and engaged coproduction process, the issues, outcomes, and proposals were recorded and fed back to participants in advance of subsequent meetings, with further feedback sought.

c) Funded Priorities for ER NTHAP

The ER NTHAP was costed and included annual priorities, indicators, and timelines. A regional proposal for once-off funding (for the three CHOs) was submitted to Genio based on priority actions identified in the Plan. In late 2023, Genio confirmed the ER THU had been successful in securing funding for all priority areas identified. These included:

- Investments in the Traveller health infrastructure, with the view to addressing staffing concerns.
- Two Whole-Time-Equivalent (WTE) Traveller posts to address health and homelessness regionally, from a social determinants of health perspective.
- Accredited, structured, and standardised training to support and sustain PHCTPs. Training for PHCTPs was identified as a mechanism to support career progression and standardisation.
- Research on Drugs & Alcohol and Childhood Immunisations.

d) National Traveller Health Implementation Group

Three representatives based in the Eastern Region were also successful in being appointed to the National Traveller Health Implementation Group. This included one representative from ER THU, one from Pavee Point Traveller and Roma Centre, and one from the National Traveller Health Advisory Forum. This is the national steering group to oversee the implementation of the NTHAP.

Traveller Higher Education & Employment Initiative

In 2023, six Traveller Health Workers from ER THU completed their third year and began their fourth and final year of the Traveller Higher Education and Employment initiative to complete their BA in Youth & Community Work from MU.

Traveller Primary Health Care Project Health Leadership and Mentoring Training

The ER THU has an ongoing role in providing technical support and guidance to projects. In 2023, to support co-ordination and training, several PHCTP Coordinators and Traveller Community Health Workers participated in a Health Leadership and Mentoring Programme initiative. This pilot initiative included 11 two-day modules with a residential at the end.

The content for this leadership and mentoring programme included the origins of Primary Health Care and how it relates to Traveller PHCTPs, values and principles of Community Development, Community Work and its role in PHCTPs, the Social Determinants of Health, leadership skills, facilitation skills, and group dynamics. Coordinators and Traveller Community Health Workers were given the opportunity to reflect on their roles and share their projects achievements and challenges, supporting the connection between learning and practice. This work supports broader objectives and commitments to training and professional development as per the NTHAP.

Galactosaemia Testing & Pilot Study

Classical Galactosaemia is a condition common in babies born to Traveller parents. Approximately 1 in 450 Traveller babies have Galactosaemia compared to around 1 in every 36,000 non-Traveller babies. In line with HSE policy, all Traveller infants should be routinely tested for Galactosaemia after birth. Traveller babies are given soya-based formula until the results come back. The delay in receiving the test results has been cited by Traveller mothers as a significant barrier to initiating breastfeeding¹.

To address this barrier to breastfeeding, the ER THU supported a pilot initiative with Children's Health Foundation Ireland in which Traveller women were offered prenatal screening for Galactosaemia, which can support early decision making with respect to breastfeeding. This included the development and dissemination of Traveller-specific resources and an information session regionally and nationally. This project complements ongoing work to develop targeted approaches to create the conditions in which support Traveller women to breastfeed, as well as the inclusion of Travellers in key policy documents concerning breastfeeding initiatives and targets in Ireland, including Sláintecare and the National Maternity Strategy.

Annual National Traveller & Roma Men's Health Day

Over 200 Travellers and Roma from around the country gathered in June in the Phoenix Park for the ER THU Traveller and Roma Men's Health Day. The purpose of this annual event is to promote positive physical and mental health as part of Men's Health Week. This initiative was designed by the ER THU and has been led by local Traveller organisations/PHCTPs and Men's Health Workers for 9 consecutive years. This day is a culmination of weeks of

¹ Towards Revitalising Breastfeeding in the Traveller Community (2021): https://www.paveepoint.ie/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/Pavee-Mothers-briefing-paper_Towards-revitalising-breastfeeding-in-the-Traveller-Community_Final.pdf

preparation for the THU's Traveller Men's Health Initiative, who run several local fitness and football groups with Traveller men locally in preparation for the event. With the support of Pavee Point's Roma Health Project, and other similar national initiatives, Roma men have also been encouraged to participate for the past few years.



Fourteen football teams from around the country competed on the day, including a team from the HSE and five Roma teams. Golf also featured, as did outdoor games such as tossing the horseshoe, Giant Jenga, and Connect 4. Several health services – including the Irish Heart Foundation, The Marie Keating Foundation, the Finglas Addiction Support Team (FAST), HSE diabetes nurses, and more – were available to provide health checks and information to attendees. A total of 115 people participated in a mini-heart check with the Irish Heart Foundation, with a further 59 people having



their blood glucose levels checked with a diabetes nurse. These health checks provide valuable opportunities for health services and Traveller Community Health Workers to start a conversation with individuals about their health.

This event had the highest attendance and services engagement so far, and strong positive feedback was given throughout the event by the participants.



Traveller Men Cycle the Waterford Greenway

Approximately 50 Traveller men took part in a 50km cycle on the Waterford Greenway to raise awareness on suicide prevention for World Suicide Prevention Day on September 10th. Traveller men from Coolock, Finglas, Tallaght, and Navan travelled to Waterford together to begin the cycle. This was an opportunity to engage with Traveller men on the issue of suicide and the prevalence of addiction, while undertaking a collective physical activity which promotes positive mental and physical health. This event was supported by the Finglas Addiction Support Team (FAST) who also attended on the day and could be available if anyone wanted more information about the services that they provide locally in Finglas. The group stopped at a Grotto near the Greenway to light a candle and have a minute's silence to remember friends and family who had died by suicide in the community.

Measles & MMR Vaccination Awareness

Pavee Point's PHCTP worked alongside Donegal Travellers Project, HSE National Social Inclusion Office, HSE National Immunisation Office, and HSE Public Health to develop a leaflet, poster and video resource highlighting the importance of the MMR vaccination. These resources were distributed via the Eastern Region Traveller Health Network (ERTHN) and the National Traveller Health Network (NTHN) to support Traveller Community Health Workers in health advocacy and providing key messaging on the group to encourage uptake of the life-saving MMR vaccination in their local areas.

Positive Ageing Group for Traveller Women

In the context of the disproportional impact of COVID-19 on older Traveller Community Health Workers, a pilot positive ageing group was established in 2023. The activities of this group were varied, allowing for flexible community work approach where participants would determine the project priorities.

To date, the group's participants have begun recording personal reflections from their individual and collective experiences as founding members of the first Primary Health Care for Travellers Project in Pavee Point. This work is invaluable and will be a tremendous asset to capture institutional knowledge and inform a model of good practice highlighting future learnings and developments of the ER THU. Their expertise and knowledge have also been an asset in mentoring other Traveller Community Health Workers and supporting their training ensuring the sustainability of PHCTPs.

Furthermore, the group are continuing intergenerational learning through the completion of a Traveller cookbook, known as "Pavee Peck". This book and accompanying website were launched in late 2023. This initiative was a partnership with TravAct, St Margaret's Traveller Association, HSE Health and Well-Being, and the Coolock Education and Training Board with funding from the "Adult Literacy for Life" collaboration and innovation fund. The cookbook captures the popular cooking methods and recipes passed down through generations of Travellers, into an easy-read resource, alongside capturing the lives of the Traveller women in their own words, as well as section in Cant, the Traveller language. The resource is now being distributed in schools and libraries across Ireland and the UK.



Launch of Pavee Peck

Newborn Bloodspot Screening

Following the direct work of the ER THU in relation to rare diseases, and specifically, Adenosine Deaminase Deficiency Severe Combined Immunodeficiency (ADA-SCID), the HSE confirmed that all forms of ADA-SCID will be included in the national newborn bloodspot screening (i.e. "heel-prick" test). The ER THU have worked with the National Screening Advisory Committee for several years, given that this serious genetic condition presents disproportionately amongst Travellers. Furthermore, the ER THU made a submission to the National Screening Advisory Committee for the inclusion of Hurler Syndrome in the newborn bloodspot screening programme, as this genetic disorder is also common among Travellers and early detection leads to significantly better health outcomes.

Key Challenges in 2023

Recruitment & Retention

The ER THU has not been immune to the challenges of retaining employees and hiring new staff which are experienced across the employment sector. This has had a particular impact on the non-profit sector in Ireland since COVID-19. The ER THU is responding to these challenges through its engagement with the National Traveller Health Implementation Group. The NTHIG has already identified several key activities with respect to further education, training and mentorship which are aimed at addressing the ongoing challenge of retaining experienced workers and attracting new staff.

Cost of Living

The cost-of-living crisis experience throughout 2023 had a significant financial impact across Ireland, including on the ER THU and its staff. Traveller organisations in the Eastern Region and nationally reported struggling with rising costs of heat and electricity within their buildings. The ER THU also sought to acknowledge the difficulties for staff in their personal lives who were facing rising costs with respect to household bills. This was a particular concern for Traveller staff, many of whom were already experiencing energy poverty, which was worsened by the sharp rises in heat and electricity throughout 2023.

Accommodation & Homelessness

Accommodation and homelessness in Ireland in 2023 has had a disproportional impact on many Traveller families. Travellers are significantly marginalised in terms of access to safe and culturally appropriate accommodation, often experiencing discrimination when accessing accommodation. The impacts of COVID-19 have further exacerbated this pressing issue for many Traveller families. As a key determinant of health, the ER THU is committed to addressing this issue in partnership with key stakeholders, including local authorities and other agencies. The ER THU seeks to respond to this issue in 2024 by employing two Whole-Time-Equivalent (WTE) Travellers with a responsibility for health and homelessness regionally; funding for which was secured through our successful application to implement the Regional THAP.

Bereavements & Suicides

The number of bereavements and suicides across the region in 2023 has had a significant impact on the ground and on ER THU staff across all projects. There were several particularly tragic incidents concerning young people and families which local PHCTPs responded to. In several of these cases, the HSE enacted Crisis Response Plans and Traveller Community Health Workers were the point of contact with the affected community. The THU Mental Health Initiative continue their work to support regional informed responses, including the development of a regional critical response plan. This reflects this strong partnership working between the HSE and Traveller projects, with informed and coordinated responses enacted.

... up with two examples for each

METHOD

- Idea
- Earnings
- Develop
- Innovate
- Experience
- Grow



ER THU Programmes and Initiatives

This section provides an overview of the Eastern Region Traveller Health Unit's Regional Initiatives.

1. Primary Health Care for Travellers Projects

The Eastern Region has nine Primary Health Care for Traveller Projects (PHCTPs) and one local health initiative:

1. Pavee Point Traveller and Roma Centre
2. St. Margaret's Traveller Community Association
3. TravAct – Coolock
4. Clondalkin Traveller Development Group
5. Tallaght Traveller Community Development Group
6. Southside Traveller Action Group
7. County Wicklow Travellers Group
8. Kildare Traveller Action
9. Balbriggan Travellers Project
10. Blanchardstown Traveller Development Group

PHCTPs provide ongoing support for Traveller families on the ground and act as an interface between mainstream health services and Travellers, effectively bridging the gap between a community experiencing high health inequalities and mainstream health services often unable to reach and engage that community effectively in health service provision. This is reflected in the All-Ireland Traveller Health Study, which reported that 83% of Travellers received health information and advice from PHCTPs and local Traveller organisations. The value of PHCTPs cannot be overstated as the trust and institutional knowledge demonstrated by Traveller Community Health Workers has had a direct impact on Traveller lives as reflected in a higher uptake in breast and cervical screening when compared to the general population:

- 25% of Traveller women had breast screening for cancer, compared with 13% of women in the general population.
- 23% of Traveller women had a cervical smear test compared with 12% of women in the general population.

Additionally, the HSE confirmed similar findings in their National COVID-19 Traveller Service User Experience Survey, with the vast majority (86%) of Travellers reporting accessing COVID-19 health information from Traveller organisations/THUs. This approach has been proven internationally as an effective method of engaging and including minority ethnic groups in health service provision.

The ten projects in the Eastern Region work with approximately 8,200 individual Travellers. However, based on the projections from the Department of Housing that the Traveller population is projected as 10,760, based on Traveller family size (4 x 2,690 Traveller families)².

² The figure of 2,690 is obtained from the 2022 Department of Housing's count of all Traveller families in Local Authority areas within CHO6, 7 & 9. This is multiplied by 4, the Census 2022 figure for the average Traveller family size.

Key Performance Indicators

Following the significant health inequalities evidenced in the All-Ireland Traveller Health Study in 2010, Traveller-specific KPIs were developed to capture awareness raising and signposting cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes, and mental health. While the KPIs are useful in indicating signposting activities, the lack of ethnic identifier in mainstream health services means that Traveller access, participation and outcomes in health services are difficult to measure. There has been some progress in this area, but further work is required in order to ensure full implementation of ethnic equality monitoring across all services.

In 2023, PHCTPs in ER THU recorded:

- 2,276 awareness raising health interventions for type 2 diabetes;
- 2,365 awareness raising health interventions for cardiovascular disease;
- 1,927 awareness raising health interventions for positive mental health promotion.

The HSE has set target for each KPI is 20% of the Traveller population over 15 years of age in the ER THU. In 2023, the PHCTPs met and exceeded this target in each area of type 2 diabetes, CVD, and mental health, with 31%, 33% and 27% reached respectively. While the Traveller Community Health Workers engage with Travellers on the ground on each KPI multiple times per year, each person is only recorded once. This ensures that the total figures at the end of each year represent unique engagements, rather than recording the same individual more than once. The limitation to this, however, is that the KPIs alone do not reflect the breadth of work conducted by each PHCTP. PHCTPs capture this work through Steering Group reports and other reporting mechanisms in order to reflect the breadth of their work.

2. ER THU Pavee Mothers – Maternal & Infant Health

Pavee Mothers is the first national Traveller perinatal health initiative which aims to empower and equip Traveller women with vital health information to make informed decisions about their care. The three main aims are to:

- Mainstream Traveller perinatal health across Traveller Primary Health Care Projects, hospital groups and CHOs, to improve Traveller maternal and infant health outcomes.
- Improve Traveller women's knowledge of perinatal health, including encouraging, informing, and empowering Traveller women to breastfeed.
- Support the development of culturally safe and inclusive care for Traveller women.

3. ER THU Traveller Mental Health Initiative

Working from a social determinants approach, the role of the ER THU Traveller Mental Health Initiative is to work towards addressing Traveller mental health inequalities. The initiative adopts a two pronged, mainstreaming, and targeted approach, to work in partnership with Travellers, Traveller organisations, the HSE and other statutory bodies to:

1. Keep Travellers well by promoting positive mental health & well-being.
2. Facilitate Travellers' equality of access, participation, and outcomes from mainstream mental health services.
3. Support the development of culturally competent & appropriate mental health services for Travellers and;
4. Impact on mental health policy & research.

Following the launch of the YoungPavees.ie website in late 2022, much of 2023 was spent further promoting the website with local groups across the country.

4. ER THU Traveller Men's Health Initiative

The THU Traveller Men's Health Initiative aims to address the health inequalities of Traveller men through targeted and mainstreaming approaches. The project is funded to take a social determinants perspective to addressing Traveller men's health inequalities underpinned by a community development approach. The programme builds in an intersectional and interagency partnership to its work across the Eastern Region. This work emphasises Traveller men's leadership, participation, and capacity to effectively tackle Traveller men's health inequalities.

A key function of the Traveller Men's Health Initiative is to create the conditions in which Traveller men can come together to access culturally appropriate health information. In 2023, the two regional Traveller Men's Health Workers coordinated local men's fitness groups in the Eastern Region. This included weekly football groups, which created a space for positive physical activity and a means for service providers to attend and provide short inputs on supports available locally, including for addiction and mental health. This local Traveller football team also had the opportunity to play in a friendly game against Coolmine Therapeutic Community in an 11-a-side match. This raised awareness on the connection between addiction and suicide and highlighted the supports available at Coolmine to participants.

As noted, another key activity for the Men's Health Team for 2023 was the 50km cycle of the Waterford Greenway for World Suicide Prevention Day. Approximately 50 Travellers from Coolock, Finglas, Tallaght, and Navan travelled to Waterford together to begin the cycle which was supported by the Finglas Addiction Support Team (FAST).



Policy & Research Contributions

Mental Health Among Traveller Men

Alongside Dr Noel Richardson of Carlow South East Technical University, the mental health initiative contributed to new research on Traveller men, titled: *Using an Intersectional Approach to Explore the Lived Mental Health Experiences of Traveller Men Affected by Suicide in Ireland*. The study findings reinforce previous research on the factors underpinning the disproportionately high suicide rate among Traveller men. By applying an intersectional lens, this research analyses how the lived experience of Traveller men affected by suicide are shaped by social determinants of health, like accommodation, education, employment, as well as racism and discrimination.

Cancer Awareness and Attitudes for Travellers

The ER THU collaborated with University College Dublin (UCD) on a national research project, funded by the National Cancer Control Programme, investigating cancer awareness and attitudes among Travellers. Five Primary Health Care Projects were trained as peer researchers and were successful at interviewing over 120 Travellers across the region. The ER THU also connected UCD researchers with PHCTPs all over the country via the NTHN. The research will be published in 2024 and the findings will inform targeted and mainstream service improvements relating to cancer prevention, detection, and care.

Traveller Community Engagement with Local Mental Health Services in Dublin North City and County

In 2022, HSE DNCC, Mental Health, commissioned research on Traveller mental health to inform the development of strategies, increase knowledge, awareness, access and utilisation of the local mental health services. Traveller projects participated in the oversight committee and supported the overall research.



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