



Traveller Counselling Service AGM 2015

Annual Report

2015

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From the Chairperson

Of course the big thing during the year that touched all of us both Travellers and the wider community was the terrible tragedy that happened out in Carrickmines where ten members of the Connors Family, the Lynch family and the Gilbert family lost their lives with also the loss of an unborn baby. The scale and loss of this tragedy has not been experienced in living memory in the Traveller community. However, we are glad to be able to say that the Traveller Counselling Service was able to support the survivors and their families and the wider Traveller community in the aftermath of this terrible tragedy. The Counselling Service had a team of four people on the ground out in the Southside from the Saturday morning that the fire took place and continues to provide support in partnership with the local Traveller groups in Sandyford and Bray.

During 2015, we have seen a huge uptake both at a local & national level of Travellers availing of the Counselling service with a threefold increase in the number of counselling hours being provided. We anticipate that the numbers will continue to grow and that demand for this badly needed service will increase further in 2016.

Unfortunately, Travellers are not engaging with mainstream counselling services but where the Traveller Counselling Service have provided counselling, Travellers are using the service. Therefore, it is essential that we keep this proven service going in order to address the mental health needs and wellbeing of members of the Travelling Community, but core funding for the service is absolutely essential.

I would like to thank all the staff and board members for their commitment and hard work in 2015 and look forward to working with you in 2016.

Jim O'Brien

Chairperson

Manager's Report

It has been a busy time since our last AGM in 2014 and there have been many developments for the Traveller Counselling Service since then. The main focus of our work has been the direct counseling work with clients which included families, couples and individuals. Since last year, we have developed counseling in Clondalkin, Tallaght and Dunloaghare. We have expanded the team and have two new counsellors and one of these women is a Traveller woman.

Local Traveller Mental Health Partnerships has been one of our priorities during 2015. The focus of this work has been on working with local Traveller groups to establish local mental health partnerships. So far, we have worked with a number of different local Traveller organizations and the feedback from Traveller groups and service providers has been very positive. The service feels that developing these mental health partnerships in local areas is key to the success of providing local mental health services and counseling to the Traveller community in local areas.

This year has also seen us take on to develop a pilot in partnership with the Parish of the Travelling People, focusing on Travellers in prison in Mountjoy and Dochas. So far we have held a number of meetings and two focus groups in the women's prison, we have also had a number of meetings with a male prisoner who wants to support the initiative and in the new year we will be moving to providing counseling in Dochas for the women, holding a number of focus group in the men's prison, providing a short news letter for prisoners and expanding the current partnership to include other service providers including Traveller groups who are currently providing services to Travellers in prison.

The service has had lot of engagement with main stream service providers in terms of delivering presentations and talks on the need for culturally inclusive mental health services and we feel that the vast majority of main stream service providers feel that there is a great need to develop culturally inclusive practices, not just for the Traveller community but for all minority ethnic groups living in this country.

The team has been working very well and we have continued to provide both individual and team supervision. We also held two training days, one on working with addiction and the other on child protection issues as both of these issues have come up frequently.

There have also been major challenges for the service and the team, none more so than the tragic loss of life in the Carrikmines fire where ten members of the Connors, Gilbert and Lynch Families lost their lives. On the Saturday morning of the fire we were able to have four of the counseling team out in Sandyford supporting the families, this support continues both in the Southside and in Bray and will be ongoing.

Funding has been one of the big challenges for the service and at one stage this became a crisis for the service. We worked very hard to turn this around and are at present able to keep the service running until the end of January. We have submitted a number of proposals and we are hopeful that we will secure core funding for the service in January.

There is a challenge of moving the service outside of Dublin and particularly to areas where there are no Traveller groups on the ground. However, we have addressed these challenges in the best ways we could and I believe that we have continued to deliver a professional counseling service in culturally inclusive ways with very limited resources. This is due to the commitment of everyone involved, without whose continued support, hard work and commitment this would not have been possible.

The Women's Mini marathon went very well and we had eight women run and walk the marathon for the Traveller Counselling Service, which raised just over €1,000, but more importantly, it raised the profile of the service among the Traveler community and similarly raised the issue of mental health. I have just touched on some of the key issues below but this does not represent the huge range of activities and work that we as a team have been involved in. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Board of Directors and all the team for their hard work and commitment.

I would like to thank all the people who have supported us and look forward to working with you in 2016.

Thomas McCann

Board

We have held four board meetings this year. It was decided during the year to expand the board of the Traveller Counselling Service and a number of new board members have joined. At present, we are at the final part of the process of signing up to the Charities Regulatory Authority Register and we are also in the process of becoming compliant with Codes of Governance, and the first stage is signing up to the codes which we are in the process of.

Team

We have been holding ongoing team supervision sessions with the staff over the last year. We are also providing individual supervision between team supervision sessions. This is because the number of clients that counsellors are seeing has increased, and this ensures that counsellors have the opportunity to look at some of the issues that emerge in the client work.

We brought someone in to do a session with the team on working with addiction issues in counselling as drug and alcohol addiction is a major issue for the Traveller community and one that seems on the face of it to be getting worse. This is also one of the biggest presenting problems for the clients who access our service. We will be holding a follow on session on this issue in the new year. We also have organised training on child protection issues and we are currently looking at developing child protection policy from a culturally inclusive perspective that would be in line with the Children First policy - we have some dates in for the new year to do this.

The team has expanded as the demand increases, however this puts more pressure on us to increase our administrative support. In response to this we have increased the hours that Beatrice works, which means that we have our website up-dated regularly, our stats are available and updated monthly, our accounts are prepared and ready for audit and we can work towards compliance with the Code of Governance.

Bernadette O'Sullivan continues to provide us with external supervision support on a regular basis and this is a central part of developing the service.

The counsellors on the team work very hard and continue to provide an excellent counselling service in sometimes very challenging conditions and both collectively and individually contribute greatly to the development of the service.

Client Work

The service is going very well with clients being seen in Fingal, Southside, Bray, City Centre and Phibsborough, Clondalkin and Tallaght and families are also being seen in the Clanwilliam Institute. In the last the last year there has been an increased demand for the service which can be seen from the number of counselling hours provided in 2014 when we provided 176 counselling hours, compared to this year when we provided 452 (end Nov) counselling hours to date, indicating a threefold increase in when compared with the number of counselling hours we provided in 2014.

Presenting Issues for 2015

Many of the usual issues continue to emerge as issues for our clients in 2014 with suicidal ideation and bereavements by suicide and fear of a loved one's suicide featuring for many of our clients. We have continued to witness a worrying increasing trend with suicides amongst women in the community. Substance misuse and addiction are similarly continuing to emerge on a more frequent basis along with the attendant issues that come with addiction, such as familial and relationship issues, separation and also the issue of domestic violence seems to feature with many of the clients.

Women's Mini Marathon

We had a total of 8 volunteers who walked/ran the mini marathon on our behalf. The event was very successful and we had tea and sandwiches in the IFI after the event. It is a very good way of raising funds but also of raising the issues in the community through people looking for sponsorship.



Website

We continue to develop the Traveller Counseling website. Beatrice has had some training with the person who set up our website so she is starting to update the website on a regular basis which is very beneficial in terms of our profile. During 2016, we will be developing specific pages for different aspects of the work that we are involved in, all ideas are welcome.

www.travellercounselling.ie

Work in Current Locations

Clondalkin

As part of the Clondalkin Traveller Mental Health Partnership, we have had a number of meetings with the Clondalkin Traveller Addiction Advisory Group which we have helped establish. This advisory group has all the addiction services and the local Traveller group at the table. We also helped to create a support and supervision space for key workers who are working with Travellers in the addiction services and this advisory group will be submitting a funding proposal for a worker to drive this initiative on the ground. This is a really innovative piece of work and could create a model for developing culturally inclusive addiction services in other local areas including addiction counselling.

Fingal

The Fingal Traveller Mental Health Partnership is going really well, we held a number meetings and have a number of events planned for 2016. One of the key things that has been happening in this area, is the Fingal Traveller Mental Health Action Group have been holding discussion groups for service providers and Travellers out in Matt Lane, which is a group housing scheme where the Fingal Travellers are based. These discussions are held on the last Thursday of every month and so far there have been five such discussions and the feedback from service providers and Travellers have been really positive. It is planned to launch a report in 2016 with all the people who have attended these discussions invited.

Tallaght

We have placed a counsellor in Tallaght and it is going really well. At present we are about to do a review with the project and other key players in the area and where we plan to invite a number of people to form a Local Traveller Mental Health Partnership in Tallaght. The work is going really well out in this area and the local project is very active on the ground.

Bray

The work in Bray is going really well and it is planned that we and the Bray Traveller development group will hold a seminar/training day for mental health service providers in the area and from this invite a number of the service providers to become part of a Local Traveller Mental Health Advisory/Working Group. This we expect will happen in the autumn of 2016.

City Centre

A number of families are being seen in the Clanwilliam Institute by the family therapist on our team. The numbers of families looking for counselling is increasing and the work there is going really well

Phibsborough

We are seeing a number of clients in Phibsborough on Thursdays and Fridays. This is also where we hold most of our meetings, such as Board meetings, team supervision sessions and Local Mental Health Partnership Meetings. The Parish of the Travellers and all the staff have been very supportive of our work and without this support we would not be able to do this.

Coolock

For the moment we have stopped seeing clients in this area but will be meeting with Trav Act in the new year to re-contract with them and hopefully re-establish the counselling on a more solid basis.

Southside

We have had a number of meetings with Southside Travellers Action Group and have placed a counsellor in the area which is going well we will be developing this further in the new year and exploring the establishment of a Local Traveller Mental Health Partnership.

Prison Pilot Initiative

The Prisons Pilot Initiative which we are working on is developing and moving at a constant pace. So far we have held a number of meetings between ourselves and the Parish which are the other partners in this project, we have also met with Exchange House and Pavee Point so as to have a picture of what other Traveller organisations are providing to Travellers in Prison. We have so far held two focus groups with Traveller women in the Dochus centre, which went really well. We have also held two meetings

with one of the male prisons in Mountjoy and intend to hold focus groups in there as well. We will be putting a short report together of our findings and possible actions which could be taken.

We plan to have this report completed by the end of 2016.

Outside Dublin

The TCS gave an input for a Traveller Men's Group in Tullamore, and have talked about a follow up meeting with service providers.

We provided two training sessions on Culturally Inclusive Mental Health with the TVG in Cork. This group have agreed to come together again and develop a set of actions particularly in relation to Bereavement in the Traveller community in Cork.

We ran two training sessions with Travellers and service providers in Kerry on culturally inclusive counselling - these were very good sessions and they agreed to set up an advisory forum to develop joint actions.

We met with MEPs in Brussels regarding issues facing the Traveller community and the need for Europe to ensure that mental health and other services are culturally inclusive. There was a follow up round table with MEPs in Dublin in September.

We attended three meetings of the new Traveller Roma Advisory Forum and also submitted a proposal on the need for culturally inclusive mental health.

Financial Report for 2015

Finance

Our latest balance, as of 08/12/15 is **15,225**

Fundraising

Since 01/03/15 we have received the following amounts in funding

HSE – Monthly Payments	7,600
Civil Services Fund (Capital Only)	3,000
Tusla	3,100
HSE – Crisis Counselling Payment	2,025
HSE – Crisis Counselling Payment (This needs to be clarified)	1,620
Mini Marathon	1,007
South Side Partnership	10,000
Totaling	28,352

Since the Start of the Year we applied and were turned down for the following

IPB Insurance	€5,000	Cultural Competency Training Module (Partnership Project)
Ireland Funds	€5,000	Cultural Competency Training Module (Partnership Project)
Social Entrepreneurs	€100,000	Partnership Project
National Lottery (DoH)	€45,000	Partnership Project
National Lottery (HSE)	€45,000	Partnership Project

Funding for 2016/17

We are hoping to secure some core funding from the State in 2016. At present we have been in touch with the HSE, Dept of Finance and the Dept of Environment and we are hopeful that between the three state agencies, core funding will be made available to the TCS that will allow for a full time wage for the Thomas and increased part time wage for Beatrice which will see the service working to its full potential.

We will continue to apply for small amounts from the funders listed above but this will apply to specific projects only. One such grant is from the St Stephens Green Trust (3K) which will go towards developing an effective funding strategy.

Funding 2015

We wish to acknowledge and thank all of our funders for 2015 and we wish to pay particular thanks to the HSE and Tusla who have consistently funded us since our inception. As can be seen from the table below, we managed to secure almost 40,000 in funding in 2015 and we have some new funding streams in 2015 that we haven't had access to in the past. Without this support, our service wouldn't remain viable.

Funding Applied for during 2015			
00/00/15	HSE - THU	11,400	11,400
26/05/15	Civil Services Fund	10,000	3,000
31/07/15	Tusla	10,000	3,100
13/11/15	HSE – Crisis Funding	2,025	2,025
13/11/15	Dept. of the Environment – Crisis Funding	10,000	10,000
20/11/15	HSE – Crisis Funding	2,000	1,620
21/12/15	Dept. of Justice	8,000	8,000
Total		363,425	39,145

Priorities for 2016

As we move into 2016, the priorities are to continue to provide a professional culturally inclusive counseling service to members of the Traveller community in the local areas where we already have established the service and move into new areas where there is a need for the service. One of the key priorities in 2016 will be to continue to develop the partnerships with local Traveller organizations, as this is a crucial factor in good quality culturally inclusive counseling becoming part of the fabric of local services which are available to the Traveller community.

The stigma which exists within the Traveller community prevents and will continue to prevent Travellers getting the help they need at an early stage unless it is addressed within the community. Part of our priorities for 2016 will be to continue to provide and engage with the wider Traveller community out in the community where Travellers live and also with local and national Traveller organisations in order to reduce this stigma and shame which would result in a major change for the Traveller community in relation to mental health. Another priority is engagement with mainstream service providers in order to develop good working relationships with these services and support them to provide a better service to the Traveller community which is more of a cultural fit with the community.

Of course funding will be a priority and trying to secure core funding for the service will be one of our key focuses in 2016.