



# Traveller Counselling Service

## Annual Report

2018

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## Nan Joyce 1940 - 2018



In memory of Nan Joyce, long term activist for Traveller rights and the first Traveller to run in the general election of 1982, who passed away this year. May she rest in peace.

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## **The Chairperson**

It has been a very busy and also a very significant year for the Traveller counselling in 2018. This is reflected in the increased demand to establish similar services in local areas, particularly outside of Dublin, where we have supported the establishment of counselling in Co Offaly and are in the process of supporting the development of counselling in Co Meath and many other areas. Having lobbied for some years, we received funding for a development worker in 2018 and employed Suzie McCarthy, which allowed the service to expand and support local groups outside the greater Dublin area to establish similar culturally inclusive counselling services.

We have seen first-hand the difference that this service makes in supporting the Traveller community to deal with mental health difficulties they experience and how this is supported by the hard work that all of the team in the Traveller Counselling Service put in.

However, gaps remain between the Traveller community and the mental health services in Ireland and these need to be addressed if we are going to have a positive impact on Traveller mental health.

One of the notable achievements of 2018 was the establishment of a National Traveller Mental Health Network, which will be launched in Galway on March 15<sup>th</sup> 2019. The National Traveller Mental Health Network will ensure that the Traveller community have a voice in how mental services in Ireland are developed and delivered and ensure that services meet the needs of the Traveller community in Ireland. The Traveller Counselling Service has been instrumental in the establishment of the Network.

We continue to create more collaborative ways of working between the Traveller community and main stream services and with Traveller groups to address the mental health needs of the Traveller community. For example, we continue to develop mental health steering groups at local level and also engage in initiatives at national level.

During 2018 we have also had some changes in our board, most significantly, Jim O'Brien who had been our Chairperson stepped down after many years of service. We are very grateful to Jim for all the hard work and commitment to the service over the last number of years.

I would like to thank all the staff and board members and all those who supported us in 2018 for their commitment to the continued development of the Traveller Counselling Service. There will, without doubt, be challenges in 2019, however, with your continued support and commitment, we can face these challenges collectively and hopefully bring about further positive change.

Chris McDonagh

Chairperson

## Introduction

Since our last AGM in January 2018, the main focus of the work has continued to be the provision of counseling to members of the Traveller community in local areas. However, 2018 saw a large portion of the work of the Traveller Counselling Service engaged with empowering local groups to put structures in place that address the mental health needs of local Travellers.

Last year saw continued development of counselling in the prison system with Traveller women in Dochas receiving counselling one day a week and support meetings with service providers and Traveller women in Dochas attended by TCS staff. This year also saw the commencement of a 6 week programme, addressing mental health and well-being, being held with Traveller men in Arbour Hill prison. This programme runs on a bi-weekly basis and has been very successful and very well received.

2018 similarly saw the continued development and establishment of the National Traveller Mental Health Network - a community led, independent, mental health network, that is due to be launched formally in March 2019.

Amongst the positives in 2018, was the continued funding from the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform for the position of a full time director and a part time administrator for the service, but also and most significantly, we secured funding during 2018 for a full-time community development worker which we have sought for number of years.

A further development in 2018, was the development of culturally inclusive counselling for Travellers in Co Offlay. The support of this project was one of our priorities for the year and involved establishing a steering group to oversee the development of this project.

We provided support to families and individuals with regard to accessing mainstream mental health services and have provided support to many of the mainstream service providers to develop more inclusive practices, by way of giving inputs, presentations and training to many groups and colleges.

GDPR and new codes of governance that are a requirement for all charitable organisations have taken up a huge amount of time and energy during the year and continue to do so but we are hopeful that 2019 will see the Traveller Counselling Service fully compliant in terms of governance.

Overall, it's been a very busy year and I would like to thank all the staff, board members, partner organisations and funders without whose support and commitment we would not be able to do the work and deliver the service that we do. We are very grateful to you all for your continued support and commitment. Though, most importantly, I would like to thank the many Travellers who have attended our service during 2018.

Thomas McCann

Director

## The Team

The team has been working very hard and continue to provide counselling to members of the Traveller community and those in relationships with Travellers. At this stage most, if not all of the therapists have full client lists in the areas they are working in and some have waiting lists. Team supervision has been and continues to be at the heart of the service and provides a space for the counsellors to come together and look at their work. Jimmy Judge continues to provide external supervision to the team. Our administrator, Beatrice Hughes has had a very busy year with an increased admin work load in terms of governance and our journey towards compliance along with the extra administrative work that comes naturally with the expansion of our service. 2018 similarly saw an addition to our team, with Suzie McCarthy starting her career with the Traveller Counselling Service with a very productive and busy first 8 months by taking on the development of key areas of work.

### The Team 2018

Thomas McCann	.	.	.	.	Director/Supervisor
Jimmy Judge	.	.	.	.	Supervisor/Therapist
Cairenn Bryson	.	.	.	.	Therapist
Jacky Grainger	.	.	.	.	Therapist
Margaret Doyle	.	.	.	.	Therapist
Louise McDonnagh	.	.	.	.	Therapist
Beatrice Hughes	.	.	.	.	Administrator
Suzie McCarthy	.	.	.	.	Community Development Worker

### And from our Partner Organisation, The Clanwilliam Institute

Aileen Tierney	.	.	.	.	Clanwilliam Institute
Ruth	.	.	.	.	Clanwilliam Institute

## The Board

The board have been very active in supporting our progress and taking on particular pieces of work both individually and in working sub-groups. This work includes being part of the development of particular projects, for example Kerry Cuskelly, a valued board member has been working on developing and delivering a 6 week programme on Wellbeing and Mental Health to Traveller men in Arbour Hill prison, or being involved in sub-groups that manage aspects of our work, such as our finance sub-group or our governance sub-group. All board members are members of sub-groups that contribute directly and actively to the smooth running of the organization.

We were very sorry in 2018 to accept the resignation of Jim O'Brien from the board. Jim had served with the board since the inception of the organization in 2008 and had chaired the board for the last number of years. We are sorry to see Jim go and wish him well.

### Board of Management 2018

Chris McDonnagh.	.	.	.	.	.	Chairperson
Kevin Burn	.	.	.	.	.	Treasurer
Cairenn Bryson	.	.	.	.	.	Secretary
Fr Paul O'Driscoll	.	.	.	.	.	Director
Kerry Cuskelly	.	.	.	.	.	Director
Geraldine Hanley	.	.	.	.	.	Director
Jim O'Brien	.	.	.	.	.	Director

## **Partnerships**

The Traveller Counselling service and the Clanwilliam Institute have a partnership arrangement where clients that the Traveller Counselling Service are not in a position to support, such as under 18's or families, are referred to the Clanwilliam Institute. Dr Aileen Tierney, director of the Clanwilliam Institute and Ruth Eustace who is a senior family therapist working with the Clanwilliam are a huge asset in terms of the support they give to Travellers and their families. They were very involved with and continue to support the families who were bereaved by the fire in Carrickmines in October 2016.

The partnership between the Traveller Counselling Service and the Clanwilliam is a very important part of the TCS vision of providing culturally inclusive counselling and therapy to families and to the wider Traveller community. Although both Aileen and Ruth work for the Clanwilliam Institute, they are both seen as an integral part of the Traveller Counselling Service team and have played a very important role in the development of the service.

In the coming year, the TCS intends to explore other strategic partnerships and how these might be developed.

## **Client Work**

The provision of counselling to Travellers has been the main stay of our service. We have continued to provide counseling in Clondalkin, Tallaght, Balbriggan, Bray, Phibsborough, Dochas and Mountjoy Prison. Our work in these areas involved supporting the local groups or organisations to develop collaborative approaches with local service providers to address Traveller mental health issues in their areas. There continues to be an increased demand for the service from local groups who would like to establish counselling in their areas. An increasing number of the clients who attend the service have self-referred and this continued to be the trend for 2018. The statistics which follow, give a more detailed breakdown of our client work in each area.

## **Training**

During 2018, the Traveller Counselling Service provided numerous training sessions to a variety of service providers and Traveller groups at local and national level. This training covered areas such as the different aspects of Traveller mental health and the development of cultural competency. We are also carrying out a pilot with the Tallaght Traveller Development Group that aims to develop a model that will support local Traveller groups to put structures in place that will ensure that they are in a position to support clients presenting to their service who are self-harming or suicidal. Funding has been secured by the local group to carry out this work.

## **Engagement with Local and National Groups**

During 2018 we have been very active in engaging with local and national Traveller organisations including the ITM, the Traveller Mediation Services, Exchange House Ireland, the Travellers in Prison Initiative, and the National Traveller Women's Forum. Should pave point not be in here too?? I added Exchange house??

We have done numerous presentations at national conferences on the issues of Travellers and mental health, including the very successful Traveller Pride event where the Traveller Counselling Service were asked to do a presentation on mental health to the wider prison population in Arbour Hill prison.

## **Traveller Pride Week**

For the first time in 2018, we held our own Traveller Pride event, where the focus was on mental health and wellbeing. We had a representative from Jigsaw, the youth mental health service provider, give a presentation on teenage mental health and how we can best support our teens during these challenging time of transition. Chris McDonagh also gave a talk on the Traveller Mediation Services and Gary Roach, from Coolmine gave a presentation on addiction and support for families living with addiction. Aside from the presentations, we had massage, acupuncture and mindfulness practices available on the day. It was a very successful event and received very positive feedback from those who attended.

## **Conflict and Mental Health**

The Traveller Counselling Service has been exploring ways of bringing feuding to an end in the Traveller community. As part of this initiative, we have been looking at ways that the service can provide specific counselling support to individuals and families who are involved in or affected by inter-family violence. To this end, the Traveller Counselling service in partnership with Exchange House Ireland and the Traveller Mediation Service is holding a conference which will look at the impact of inter-family conflict on mental health and interventions to address these issues.

## **Governance**

We have been very active in continuing to develop our codes of governance and policies for the organisation and have most policies now in place. This area is continuing to be developed by both Beatrice and Thomas. There is a huge amount of work involved in getting this done, however, there is an end in sight and we hope to be fully compliant before the end of 2019.

## **Establishing Counselling Outside Dublin**

Establishing counselling for Travellers outside of Dublin and particularly where there is no Traveller group on the ground has been and continues to be a challenge. We have supported the establishment of counselling for Travellers in Co Offaly , which was one of our priority areas in 2018 and we have continued our efforts to support the emergence of counselling in Limerick, however, with little Traveller infrastructure in place this has proved very difficult. We have also been engaging with Travelles in County Meath and have agreed to support them to establish counselling as part of their mental health strategy.

## **Policy Work**

We continue to play an active role on the NTRIS steering group which plays a key role in the development of policy regarding the Traveller community in Ireland and the ways in which services are provided to Travellers.

## **Traveller Oireachtas Group**

We have had a number of meetings and did a presentation to the Traveller Oireachtas Group, which is made up of senators and TDs who support the Traveller community and recognise and acknowledge the discrimination and exclusion that Travellers have faced in Irish society. They have identified three areas that they will work on, education, accommodation and mental health.

The Traveller Counselling Service has made a number of submissions to the All-party Oireachtas Committee on the future of mental health in Ireland and the Expert Group on Traveller Accommodation.

## **Group Support**

We have also started to provide support in a group setting to members and staff working with the local Traveller organisation as part of a pilot project we are running with a local group in Tallaght. The learning from this pilot will inform how and what kind of group supports we will provide to Travellers in the wider community as time goes on. Even though this is still at an early stage, so far it is going really well.

## **Counselling and Client Work for 2018**

The provision of counselling is a very significant aspect of the work that the Traveller Counselling Service carries out. It was our central aim when we first began as a service in 2008 and while this aim has since broadened to include advocacy, work in the prisons etc, the provision of one to one counselling to members of the Traveller community, remains central.

As the nature of this work is so private and confidential, we can easily lose sight of the great work that is being done on the ground. To this end, for our 2018 Annual Report, the Board of Management asked that our counsellors provide us with a brief report of how their work has been developing during 2018. These reports are included below. The counsellors were also asked to provide, where possible, a testimonial from a client they are working with. These testimonials are interspersed throughout the statistical report.

### **Cairenn Bryson, Therapist**

I have been working as therapist with the service since it began. Initially I found myself sitting waiting for clients to engage and for the community to develop trust in me as counsellor. Today paints a very different picture of a community not alone engaging but of one crying out for support and finding that in a service that is culturally sensitive and appropriate.

My work includes Balbriggan, Phibsborough and Dochas Women's Prison. Each of these areas has both male and female clients and are frequently at capacity with growing waiting lists. To begin with, the clients were mainly female though over time and as trust built in the local community the men began to engage and continue to do so.

With regard to Balbriggan, the connection with and support of the local centre no longer exists which means that all referrals are by word of mouth and the situation is far from ideal. In saying this, all sessions are full and work with the local community and services is ongoing. There is a need for ownership by local groups and services and a links person on the ground would be a great asset.

The work in Phibsborough is running smoothly with referrals coming through the management. The relationship with the Parish is healthy, supportive and positive.

Regarding Dochas Womens Prison, the work here is progressing well. The connections with other services for Travellers in prison are ongoing and developing and the only obstacles lie within the prison system as a whole. What always strike me in Dochas prison is the over representation of Traveller women. They are the most marginalised group in an already marginalised community.

All the issues such as addiction, bereavement, suicide, depression and children in care are experienced by these women on a whole other level. The demand for the counselling is very high and a real trust has developed as the main pathway for referral is word of mouth.

Lastly, it has been and continues to be a great privilege for me to be so openly invited into the lives of my clients not least because I'm a member of the majority community but also because I'm hugely aware of the fact that the very issues I work with are predominantly as a result of how Travellers are viewed and treated in Irish society on so many different levels.

*"Counselling has helped me greatly. It has helped me understand when I'm being taken advantage of and has helped me draw clearer boundaries", (Dublin, Woman, 40's).*

Margaret Doyle, Therapist

When I initially joined the Traveller Counselling Service in March 2015, I was working in Tallaght. It was a slow but steady start and has gradually progressed. I am very glad to say that men are engaging with the service as well as women and to me this is indicative of the trust that people have in the service.

Many issues are spoken about in our sessions. Depression, accommodation and poverty affect the majority of my clients. Lack of employment opportunities impact greatly on the men, challenging their role as provider and affecting their self-esteem.

Many clients have been affected by suicide, some experiencing suicide ideation and a number having made one or more attempts to take their own lives.

A number of clients have returned to counselling after some time away. I see this as a very positive message that proves how valuable and necessary the service is.

Aside from the issues previously mentioned, many other issues are discussed and where necessary further actions e.g. referrals are made to relevant services. Since August this year I have started working in the Clondalkin community and I am glad to say that clients are engaging well there too. I look forward to my continued journey with the Traveller Counselling Service and the much appreciated support from everyone involved in the provision of this service.

*"Counselling makes a big difference in getting through life's difficult times, I'd be lost without it", (Woman, 50's, Dublin).*

### Jacky Grainger, Therapist

I have worked in Bray for 10 years and over that time the service has gone through some changes. When we first started out, there was on average of two clients per week perhaps three, and these would have been predominantly but not exclusively female. Now we have four to five clients per week which is almost predominantly male, and have a constant waiting list of at least four or five people. The factors that led to this turnaround are I think as follows:-

Firstly, outreach in the community. We held meetings with Traveller organisations and invited anyone and everyone, PHN's brought the news of the service out to the sites, outreach workers informed their clients and groups that they worked in, and community leaders spread the word to various groups and committees.

Secondly, the need for the service. The need for the service itself in the community drove the demand up as suicide rates climbed and addiction soared in some families and communities, the latter in a lot of cases drove the former, when the offshoot issues of addiction such as crime, poverty and ability to care for children became endemic in some communities. People turned to a service they had perhaps heard about a long time ago with a view to finding someone they could talk to who was not involved with the family/community that they could talk to freely and find some relief and hopefully work out some answers for themselves/find information on appropriate referrals maybe.

Lastly, and most importantly, word of mouth. The vast majority of clients in the last 2-3 years especially have all come because someone who had already been had told them about it. Particularly among the men, which is what drove the uptake in men taking up the service. Traveller men talk to each other more now and there was a wind of change over the last five years in which I'd say it's now almost common for men to talk to each other, or at the very least mention to each other, the importance of good mental health, or 'talking about your problems'. What I hear men say a lot now is, 'So and so told me he talked to the woman here (or the woman in Tallaght or wherever they may have gone) and that it gave him some peace, so I'm here'. That for me is one of the greatest achievements for the service and the community as when we first began, a lot of men would call up, but very few would actually show up. Now I would go so far as to say, it's almost becoming as commonplace as needing to go to a doctor or PHN in a lot of communities

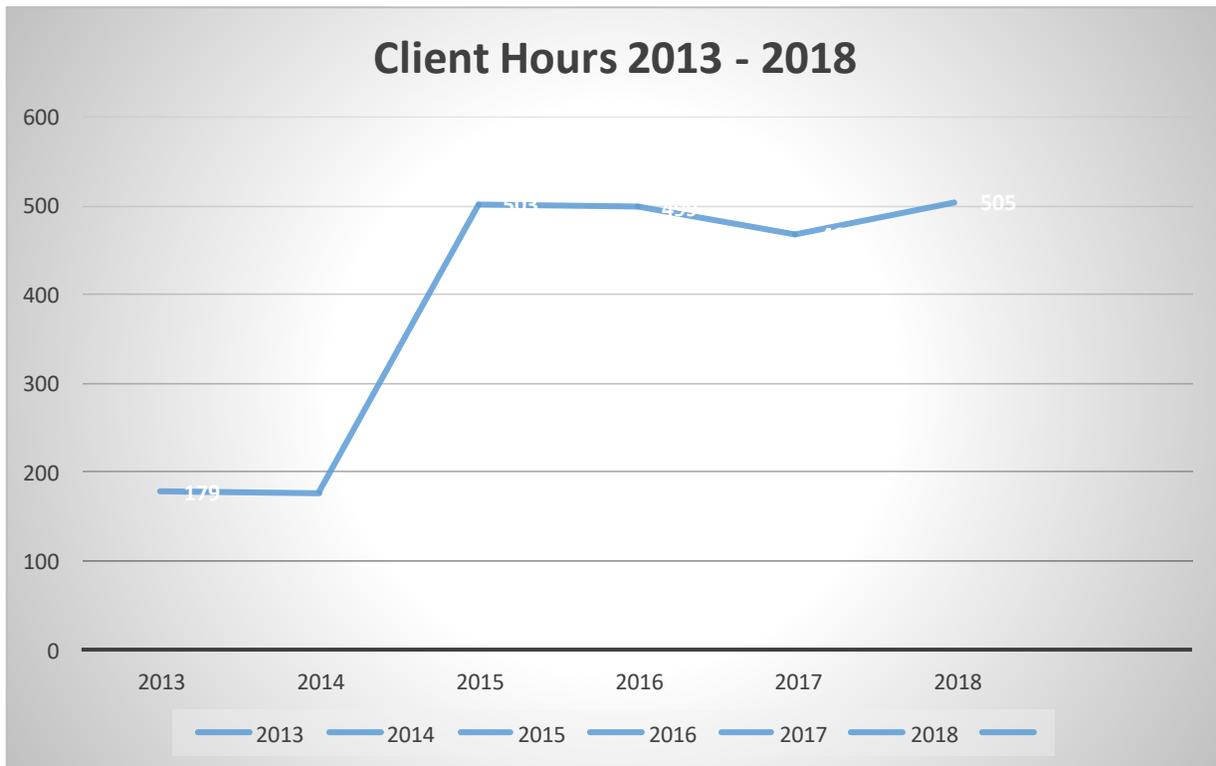
*"I've come a long way in my counselling. I had a very bad time in my childhood and I went to counselling for eight years. It helped me when three of my children died and it got me away from my violent ex-husband, it helped me with my confidence. I felt ugly and fat. I had a very bad time, a bad life.*

*I enjoyed the counselling. The counsellor was very understanding. She talked with me about me using drugs and I stopped eventually and I'm more happier now that I'm off it. It did me so much good and I've come on a long way. I'm happy. I have my confidence for the first time and I feel like I'm on top of the world." (Wicklow, Woman, 50's)*

## Client Statistics for 2018

### Client/Counselling Hours 2013 - 2018

Since our inception in 2013, to year end 2018, we have provided a total of 1831 counselling hours to members of the Traveller community. The graph below shows the client hours provided between 2013 and 2018 and records the significant increase in the provision of counselling to Travellers since 2015. The slight dip in 2017 is a reflection of a member of the counselling team taking parental leave after her maternity leave. We are expecting her to return in 2018.

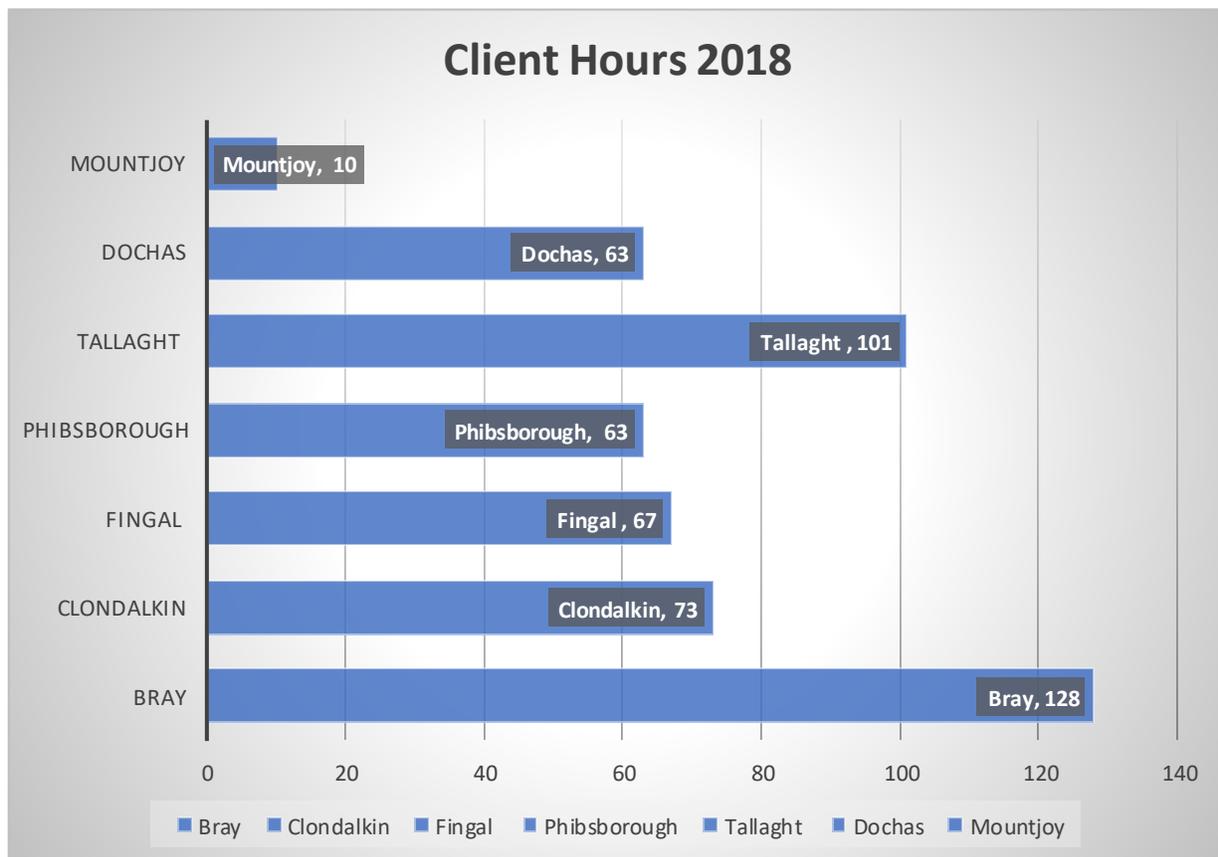


## Client Hours 2018

We have provided a total of 505 counselling hours during 2018 which is consistent with the previous two years, taking into account one therapist on maternity leave.

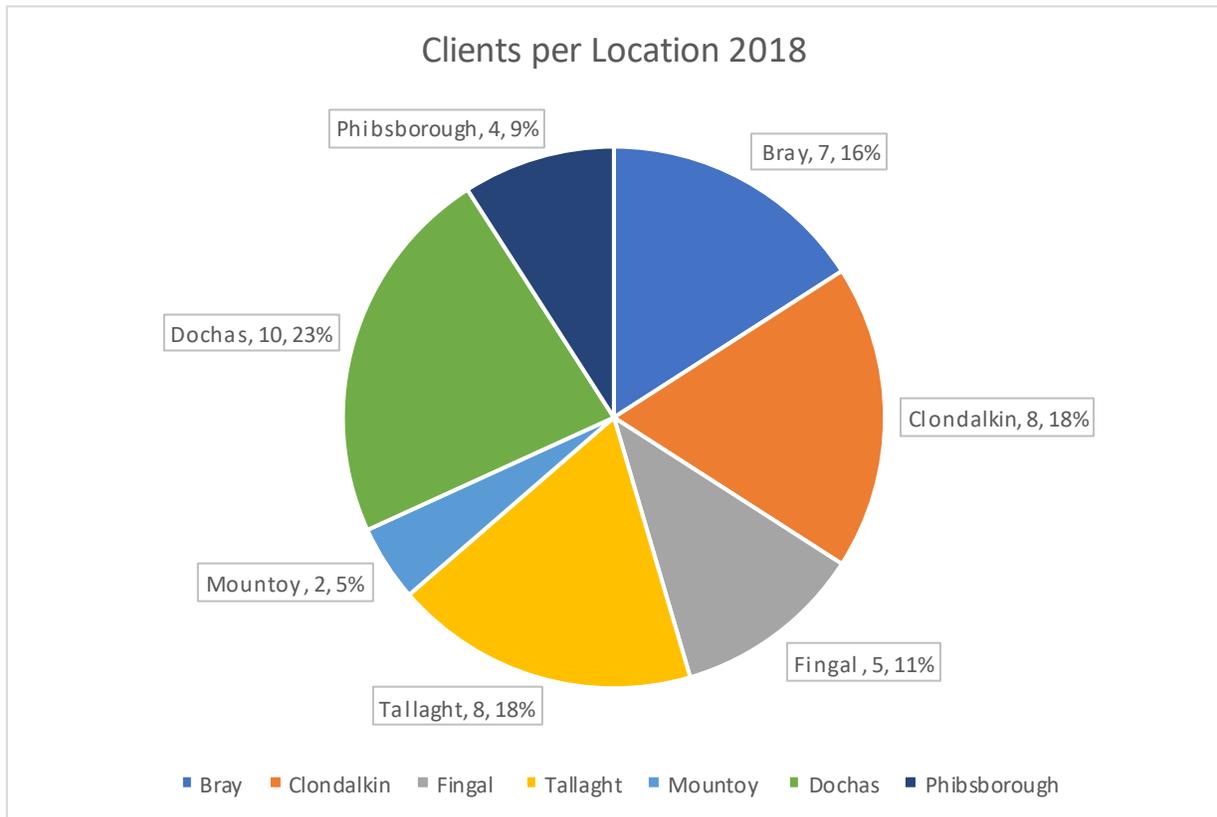
The counselling that took place during 2018 was provided in 1 Wicklow and 6 Dublin locations, including the commencement of a pilot counselling service in Mountjoy Prison.

### Client Hours by Location 2018



## Total Number of Clients for 2018

We have seen 44 individual clients in 2018, in the six locations listed below. While this number is down on last year, as the hours are increased since 2017, it indicates that clients are engaging for longer with the service which is a positive development.



While Dochas represents the highest number of clients per location, this high figure may in many respects be representative of the high turnover of Travellers in Dochas.

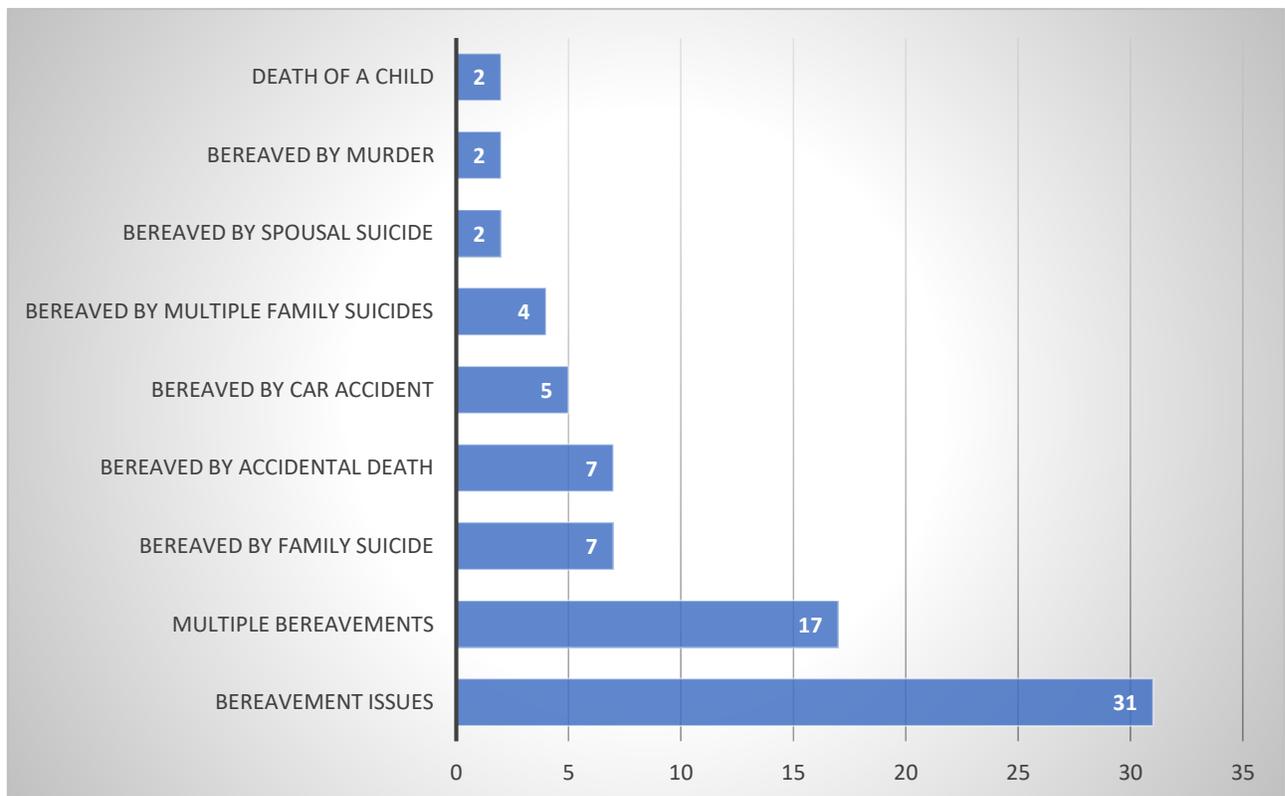
## **Bereavement 2018**

Bereavement remained one of the biggest issues our clients dealt with during 2018

- 70% of all clients present with bereavement issues
- 39% of clients experienced multiple bereavements
- 16% of clients have been bereaved by suicide
- 16% were bereaved as a result of an accident
- 9% of clients have experienced multiple family suicides
- 11% were bereaved as a result of a car accident
- 5% of clients lost their spouse to suicide
- 5% of clients were bereaved by murder

While those bereaved by suicide remains at 16% indicating no change since 2017, a worrying increase is those who were bereaved through accidental death which increased to 16% (7) in 2018 of which 11% (5) were car accidents though may also be indicative of the precarious living conditions that Travellers contend with. Included in this 16% (7), is a tragic accident resulting in the death of a young child.

### **Bereavement 2018**

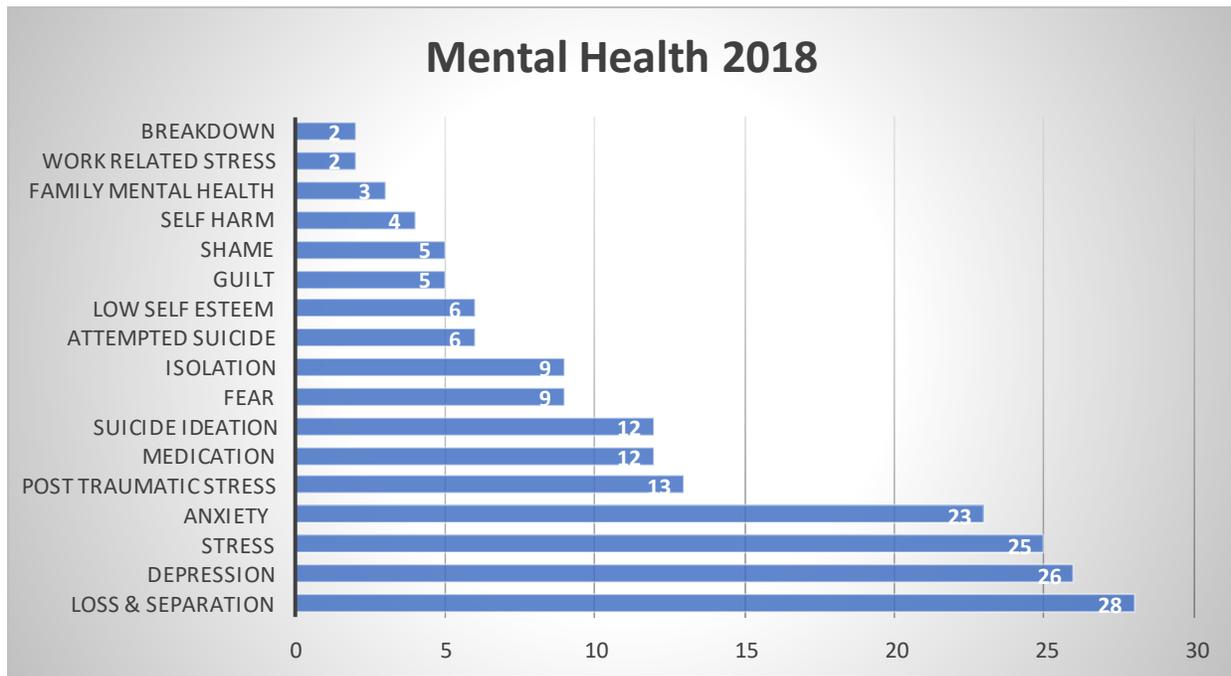


## Mental Health & Related Issues 2018

The majority of clients attending our service are facing very real struggles with their mental health though we have seen a decrease in clients presenting with persistent anxiety and stress since 2017, which is hopefully an indication of the positive impact of their engagement with the counselling process. Where improvements were noted, it remains a very real concern that almost one third of clients seen during 2018 were experiencing or had experienced suicide ideation.

Another statistic here that gives cause for concern is the elevated use of medication to help manage their mental health.

- 59% of clients suffering from/diagnosed with depression
- 57% of clients experiencing consistent stress
- 52% of clients experiencing consistent anxiety
- 34% of clients experiencing loss and separation in its many guises such as marital separation, separation from children, imprisonment etc.
- 29% or over one quarter of clients are living with post-traumatic stress syndrome
- 27% of clients using psychotropic/anti-depressant/sleeping tablets or similar prescriptions
- 27% of clients experiencing suicide ideation
- 16% of our clients are experiencing fear in their day to day lives 14% of clients attempted suicide
- 11% of clients were troubled with feelings of guilt
- 11% of clients struggling with feelings of shame
- 9% of clients are engaged in direct self-harming behaviours



### **Contributory Factors 2018**

It is important to note before proceeding, that even though issues such as exclusion, discrimination and racism and the many issues they contribute to such as unemployment, social exclusion, low mortality etc. do not feature in the presenting issues of our clients, this is not to suggest that these are not very real issues for the Travellers attending our services, but rather, it signifies the extent to which these issues are ingrained in the psyche of Travellers that they come to accept these experiences as the norm.

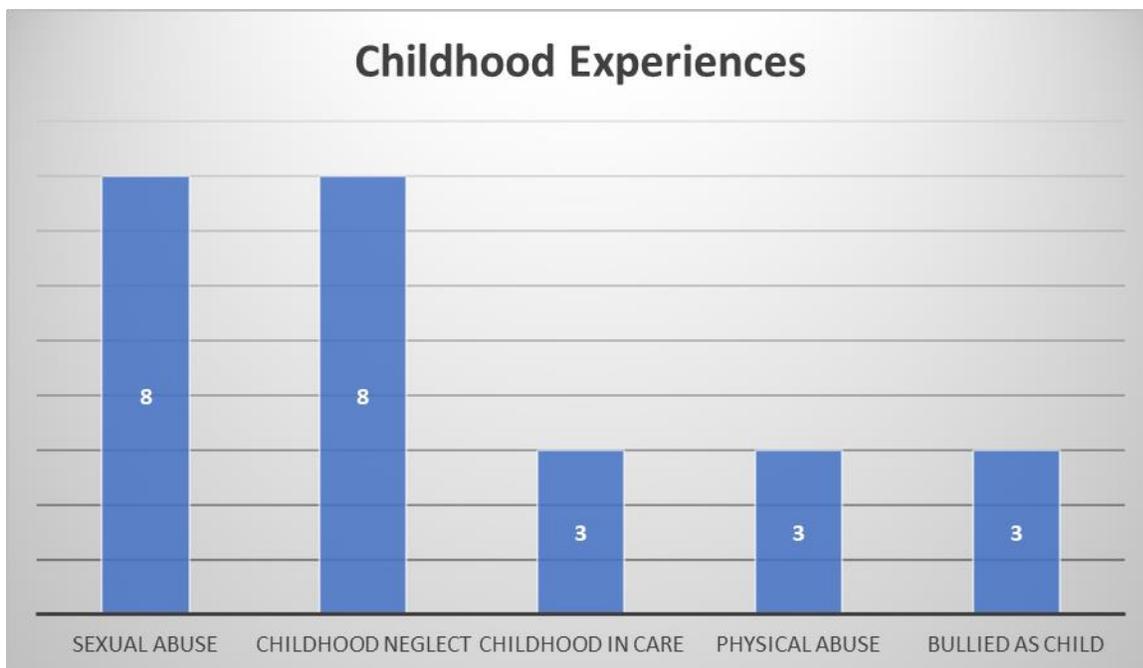
There are a variety of factors that implicate the well-being of clients attending our service during 2017. We have separated some of the more prevalent factors to be looked at individually.

### **Childhood Experiences 2018**

Unresolved traumas from childhood can implicate clients mental health and well-being into adulthood. Some of the issues that our clients presented with that impacted their childhoods and continue to reach into their adult lives are as follows:-

- 18% of clients were sexually abused as children
- 18% of clients experienced neglect as a child
- 7% experienced physical abuse in childhood
- 7% were bullied as children
- 7% of clients spent some or all of their childhoods in care

While the rate of sexual abuse reporting has doubled since 2017, this is in relation to retrospective abuse which suggests that clients are more confident in how this disclosure will be managed. During 2018, we submitted one report to Tusla under the Child Protection Act.

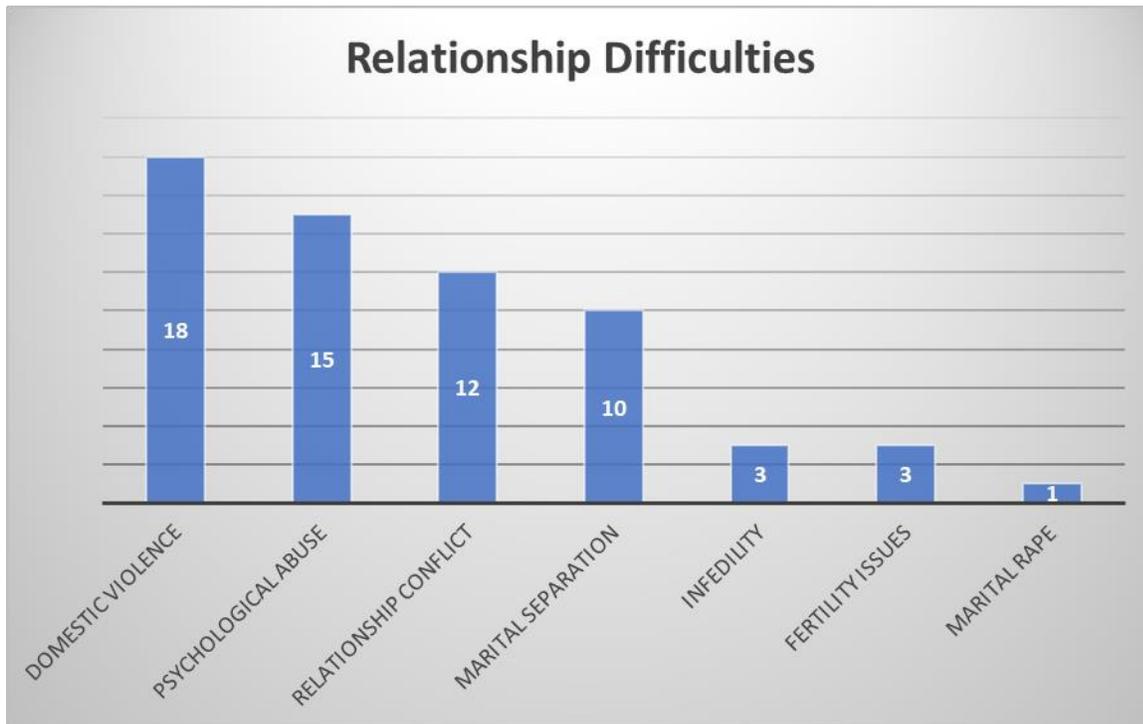


## Primary Relationships 2018

Difficulties within their relationships with spouses or partners were a further cause for concern for many of our clients.

- 41% were victims of domestic violence
- 34% of clients were or had experienced psychological abuse in their relationships
- 27% of clients were or had experienced conflict in their relationships
- 23% were separated
- 7% experienced infidelity
- 7% Fertility Issues including miscarriage
- 2% had experienced marital rape

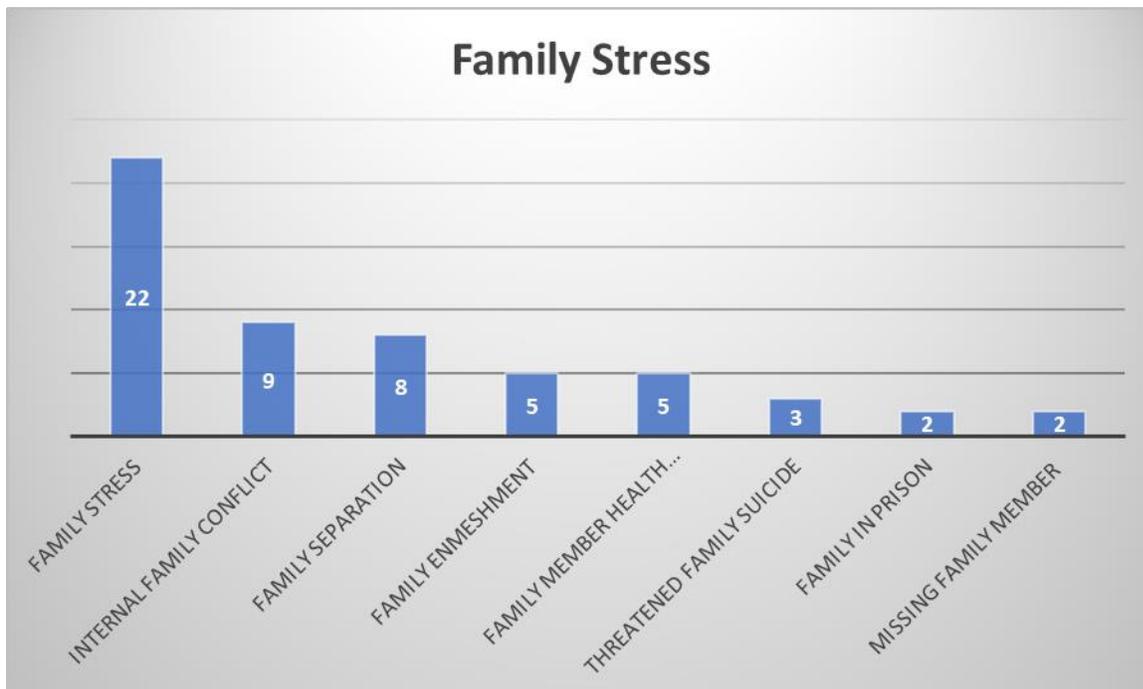
Out of a total of 30 women seen by the service last year, 18, representing 60% were or had experienced domestic violence. The prevalence of domestic violence is a worrying concern.



## Family Concerns 2018

Concerns and worries about their families or issues that are impacting their families was another major issues for our clients in 2018. Considering the role that family and extended family play in the lives of Travellers, these concerns have significant implications for our clients. In 2018 we found an increase in the levels of internal family conflict being reported by our clients

- 50% of clients were experiencing high levels of stress due to family issues
- 20% of client's families were engaged in internal family conflict
- 18% were separated from their families
- 11% of clients felt the negative impact of family enmeshment
- 11% of clients had on-going health concerns with family members
- 7% were living with the threat of suicide within their family
- 5% of clients had a family member in prison
- 5% of clients were dealing with the stress of a missing family member

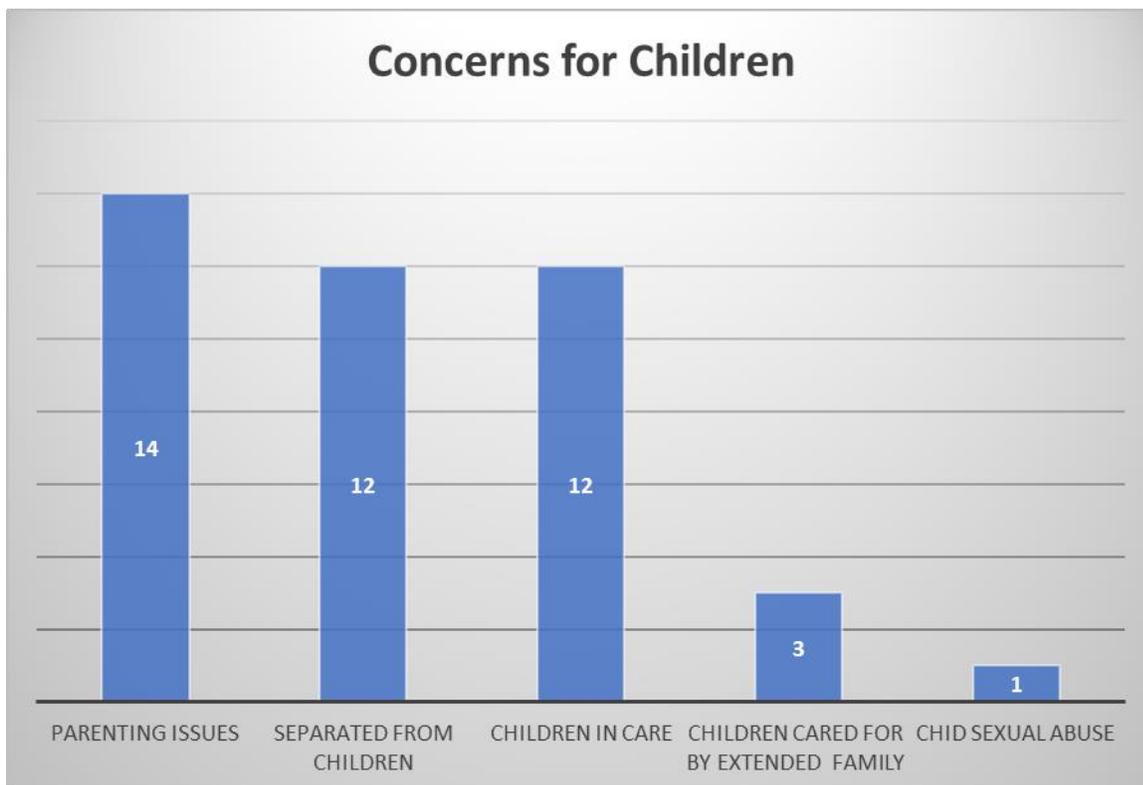


## Concerns for Children - 2018

Closely linked to the concerns for family, are the concerns that clients presented with in relation to both their adult and dependant children.

- 23% or just under a quarter of clients presented with parenting difficulties
- 16% of clients were separated from their children. The large volume of clients seen in Dochas explains this elevated figure though does not represent all clients separated from their children
- 18% of client's children were in care. Again, this figure is elevated due to the high number of clients seen in Dochas during 2018, though again, it is not all inclusive of women in prison, there were a number of other clients, both men and women whose children were in care.
- 7% of clients children were being cared for by a family member

There were no reports of abuse of children during 2018.



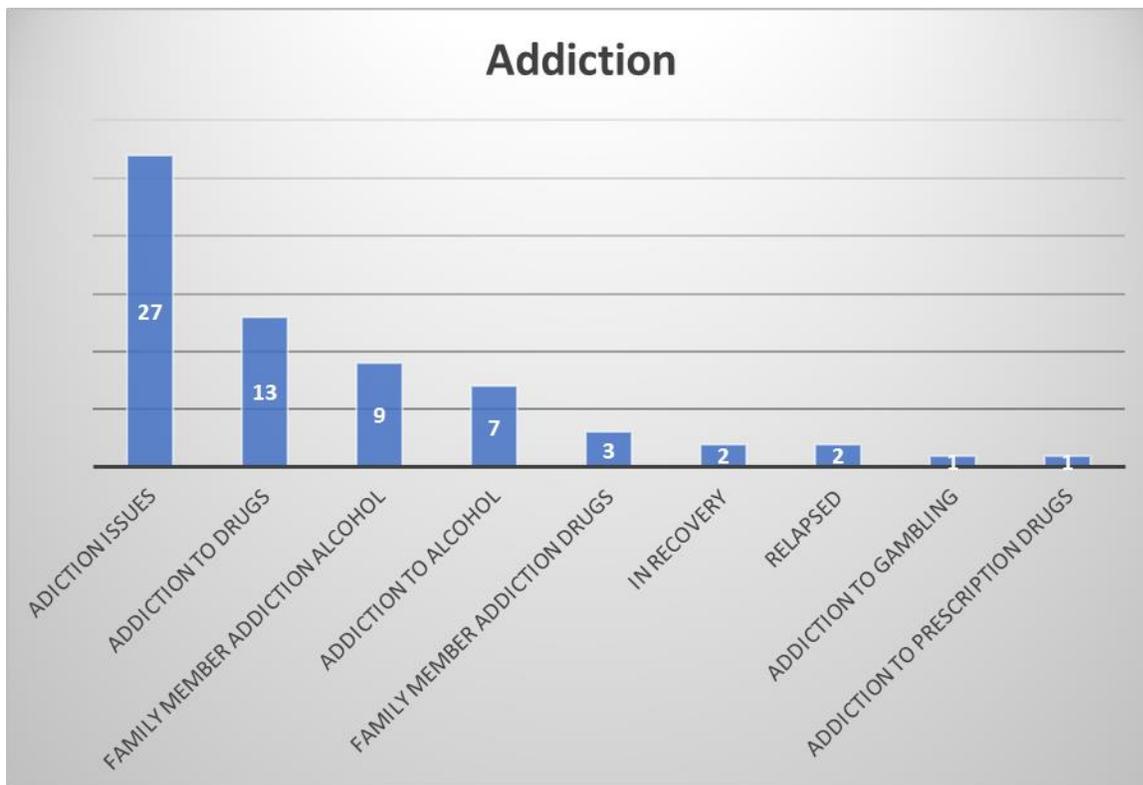
## Addiction - 2018

In previous years, we have included addiction under the heading of contributory factors, though considering the impact of addiction on our clients during 2018, with almost two thirds of all clients presenting with addiction issues, we are examining addiction as a separate issue.

For the most part, addiction can be understood as a symptom of other underlying issues. In our service we see addiction as a disorder affecting the entire family and for many Travellers, the extended family.

- 61% of clients presented with addiction issues. This referred to addiction to both alcohol, drugs, gambling and prescription medication and similarly referred to their own addiction problems and those within their families and in some cases both.
- 46% of clients presented with their own addiction issues, of which 16% related to alcohol and 30% related to drug addiction, 2% gambling and 2% prescription drugs.
- 27% of clients were impacted by the addiction of family members, with 20% reporting alcohol as the primary addiction and 7% of family members addicted to drugs.
- 5% of clients went into or were in recovery
- 5% of clients had relapsed

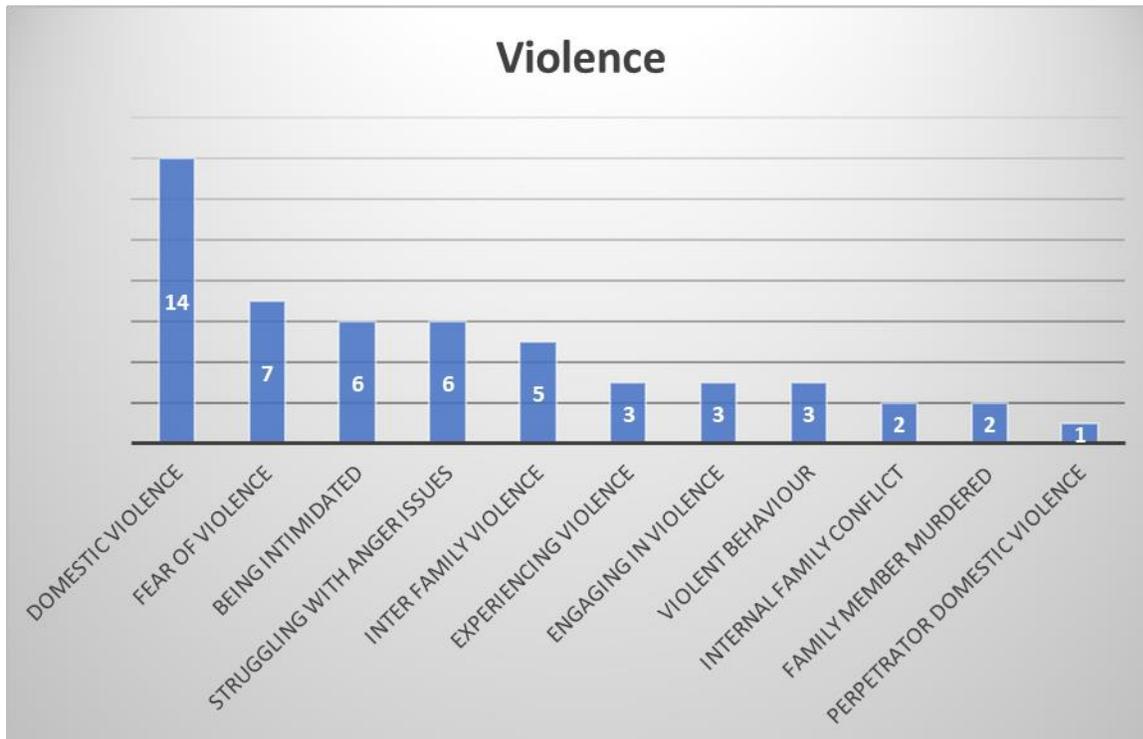
An increase in drug addiction is perceptible in these figures, with 30% of clients presenting with drug addiction issues. This is somewhat inflated with the inclusion figures for Dochas, as addiction levels can be found to be high amongst prison populations in general.



## Violence - 2018

In the past number of years, we have noticed more and more clients impacted by violence. With this in mind, we have for our 2018 statistics, taken 'violence' as a separate issue. Our statistics include those impacted by violence and those engaged in violence and who are working towards positive change.

- 41% of all clients (60% of female clients) were impacted by domestic violence during 2018. This figure includes clients no longer living in violent relationships but who continue to be impacted by them. This figure similarly includes clients that experienced domestic violence in childhood.
- 16%, again a worryingly high percentage of our clients are living in fear of violence.
- 11%, representing a significant reduction of 9% of clients reported being impacted by inter family violence during 2018. Part of the Traveller Counselling Service strategic plan for 2019 is to devise counselling in conjunction with the Traveller Mediation Services, specifically aimed at families engaged in or impacted by inter-family violence. We hope that this intervention will support the work of the mediation services in reducing the levels of violence currently being experienced within the community and trust that the reduction between 2017 and 2018 is evidence of the work of the Traveller Mediation Services.
- 7% of clients are currently experiencing violence in their lives
- 14% of clients are being intimidated. This includes domestic and inter- family violence
- 14% of clients are struggling with anger and rage and their violent behaviours
- 5% of clients are dealing with internal violence in their families and extended families
- 7% of clients are engaging in violent behaviour
- 5% of clients have had a family member murdered
- 2% of clients are perpetrators of domestic violence

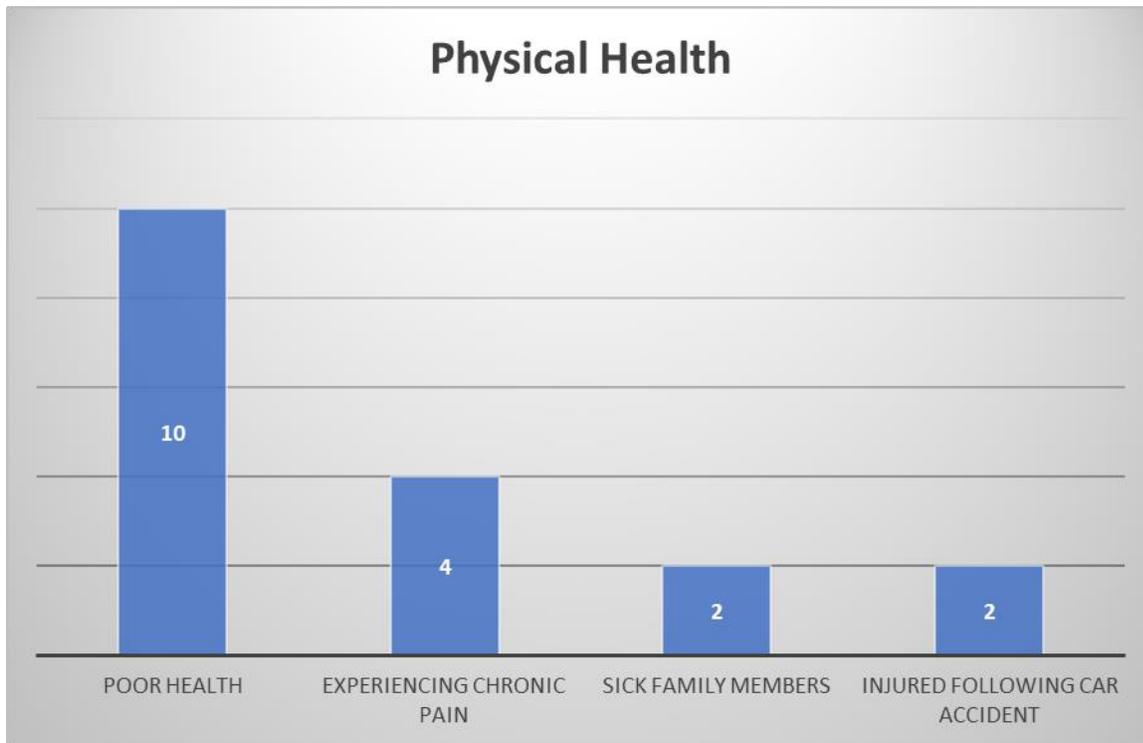


## Physical Health - 2018

A high percentage of clients presented with health issues during 2017. This included those living with health conditions themselves and those living with family members with health concerns.

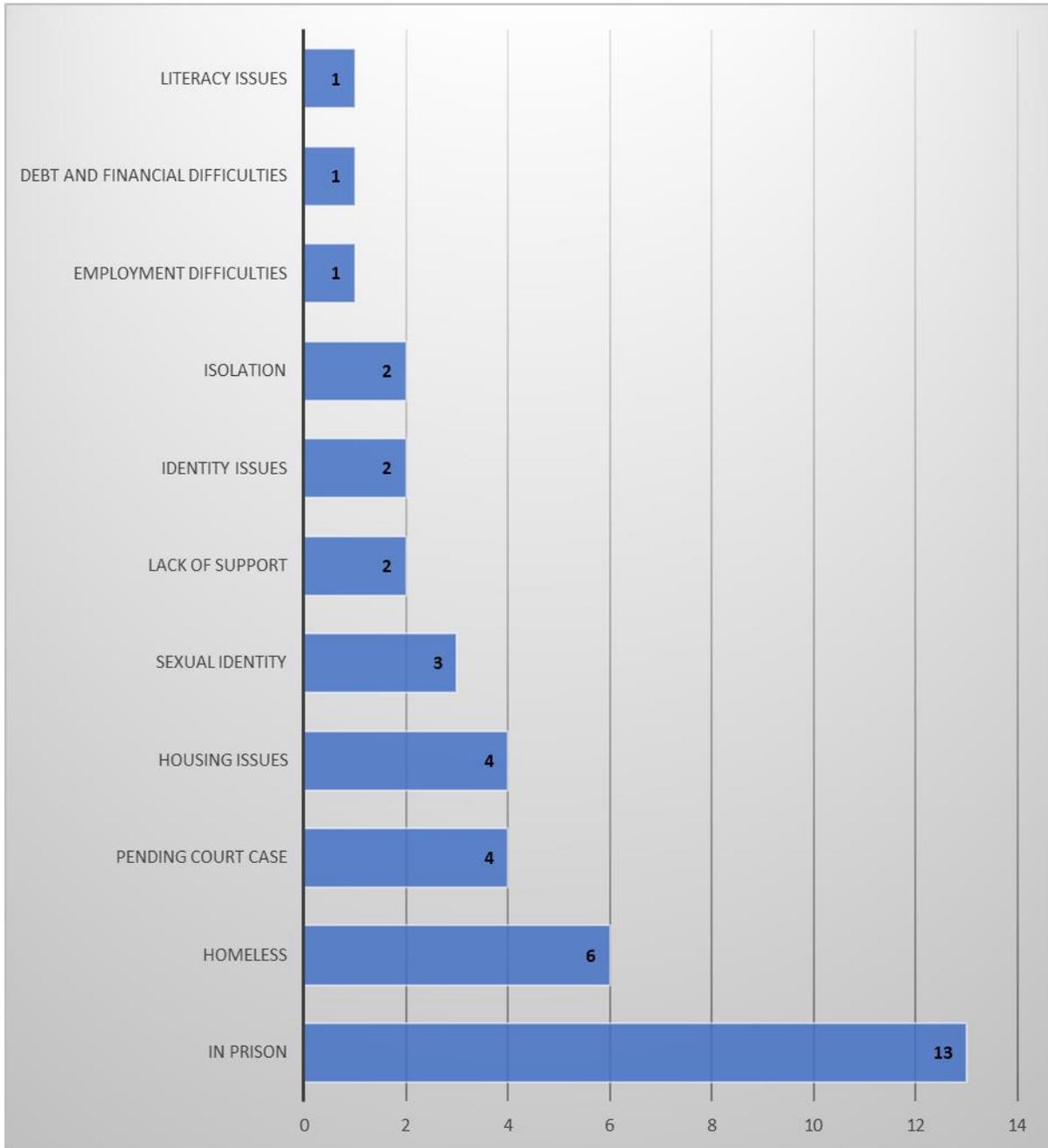
Poor physical health can have an impact on mental health and well-being, and it is for this reason that we have included this issue as a separate topic.

- 23% all clients presented with physical health concerns during 2018
- 9% of clients were experiencing chronic pain
- 5% of clients had family members with health problems
- 5% of clients were suffering as a result of injuries sustained in a car accident



### Other Contributing Factors - 2018

Along with the issues addressed previously, the following are additional contributory factors that were impacting negatively on our clients lives during 2018.



There is an array of issues that implicate mental health for the Traveller community, and below are a breakdown of these issues in order of prevalence.

While being in prison is the most common issue in terms of contributory factors, this high figure can be attributed to our work in the prisons (Dochas and Mountjoy) during 2018.

Housing and accommodation issues are a constant issue for members of the Traveller community.

This issue is comprised of two elements, firstly the lack of suitable accommodation for Traveller families, and secondly the standard of current accommodation. While these two issues have a significant impact on Travellers mental health, resulting tragedies from unacceptable standards of accommodation, such as Carrickmines, have a lasting and deep impact on mental health not only for those directly affected, but through the entire community.

While housing and accommodation issues are a common theme for the Traveller community, an emerging concern that our statistics indicates is the issue of homelessness. In the past Travellers rarely if ever experienced homelessness but with increasing numbers of Travellers moving into the private rented sector as a result of nowhere to pull in their trailers and criminalisation of nomadism through the anti-trespass legislation, we are seeing the issue of homelessness grow within the Traveller community.

Pending court cases may be understood in terms of the number of clients currently in prison, pending further court appearances though this figure includes non-prisoners also.

We welcome the increase in clients presenting with sexual identity issues as in the past, sexual identity was such a taboo subject, that an increase in this figure indicates that the community is becoming more accepting and more Travellers are finding the confidence to explore their sexual identity.

Lack of support and isolation are emerging and worrying concerns, as they are indicative of the changed living circumstances within the community, with young families often opting for rented accommodation in the private sector thereby missing out on the family support that has traditionally been available to young Traveller families through living with the extended family.

Other factors that were less prevalent though none-the-less very significant are listed below:-

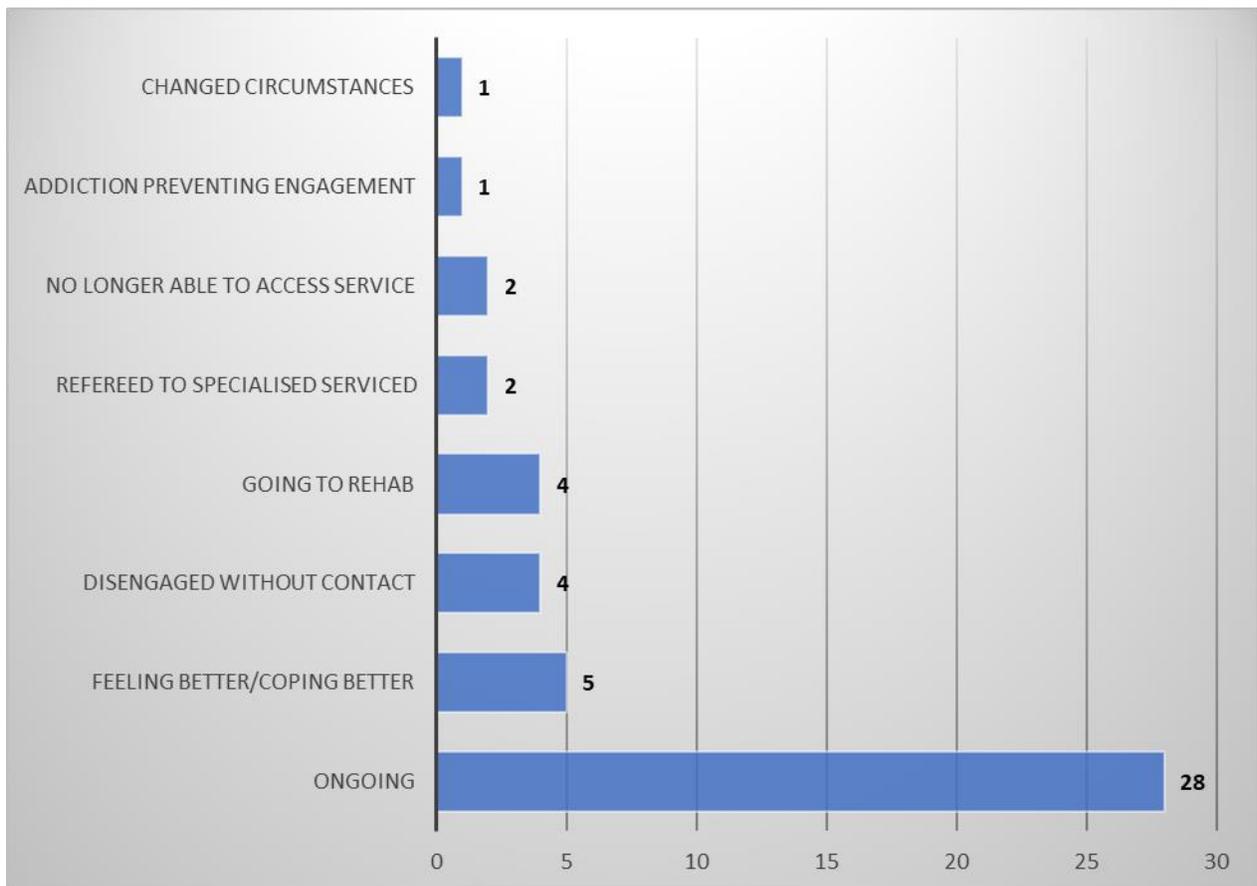
- identity issues
- pending court case
- employment difficulties

## Outcomes for 2018

The following outcomes were recorded for clients for 2018. All the clients included in these statistics finished with the service during 2018..

- 64% of clients who were attending the service in 2018 are still attending the service. This is a high level of clients continuing from one year to the next and reflects a positive trend for the service.
- 36% of clients finished counselling during 2018. Of these,
- 11% of clients finished up and were feeling better and were coping better with their circumstances (eg left violent partner, addressing addiction in family)
- 9% disengaged without further contact
- 9% of clients had gone into rehab
- 5% of clients were referred on to specialised services
- 5% were no longer able to attend due to a change in their circumstances. 2% of clients were unable to attend due to addiction issues
- 2% stopped coming as they were no longer able to access the service due to a change in their circumstances

### Client Outcomes 2018



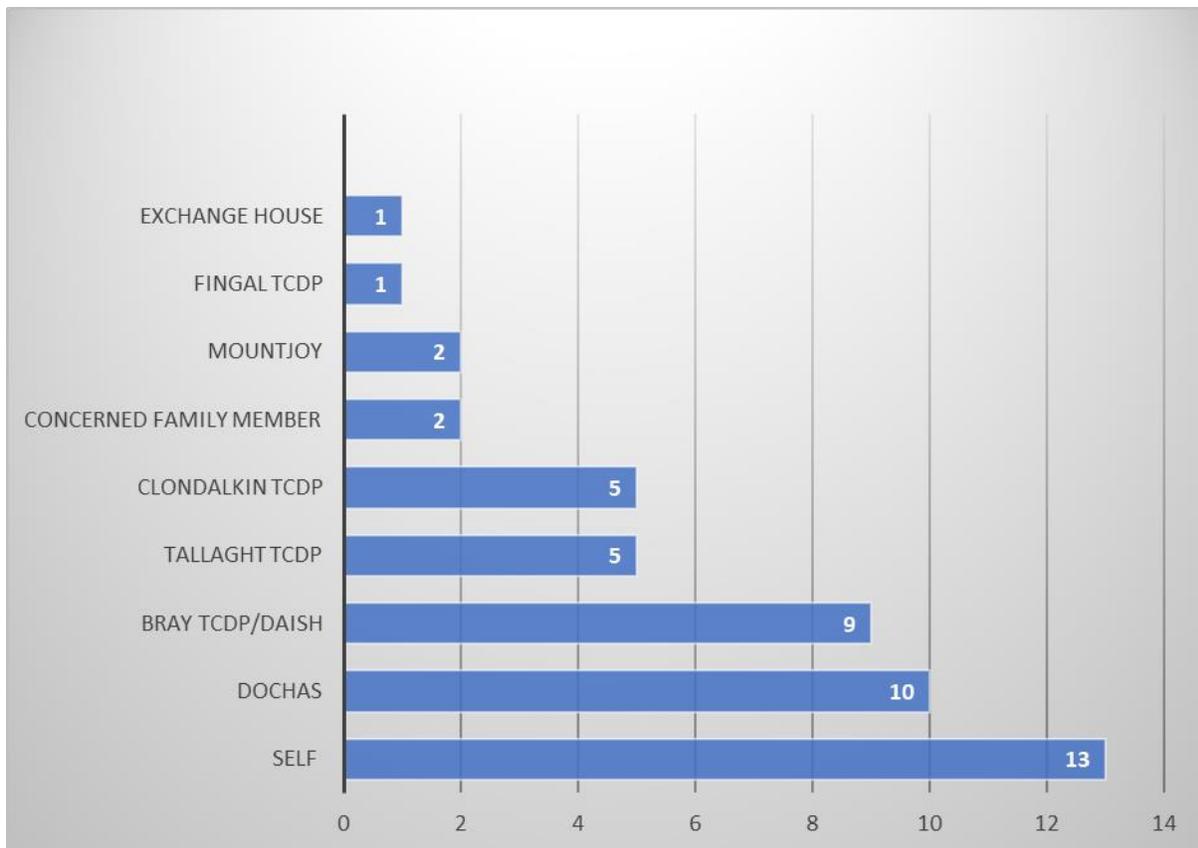
## Referrals 2018

We can see from the figures below the highest number of referrals to the service were self-referred, indicating that our service is known and trusted within the community.

We have noticed an increase in clients returning to the service during 2018.

Referrals from ancillary services similarly indicates that awareness of our service has increased.

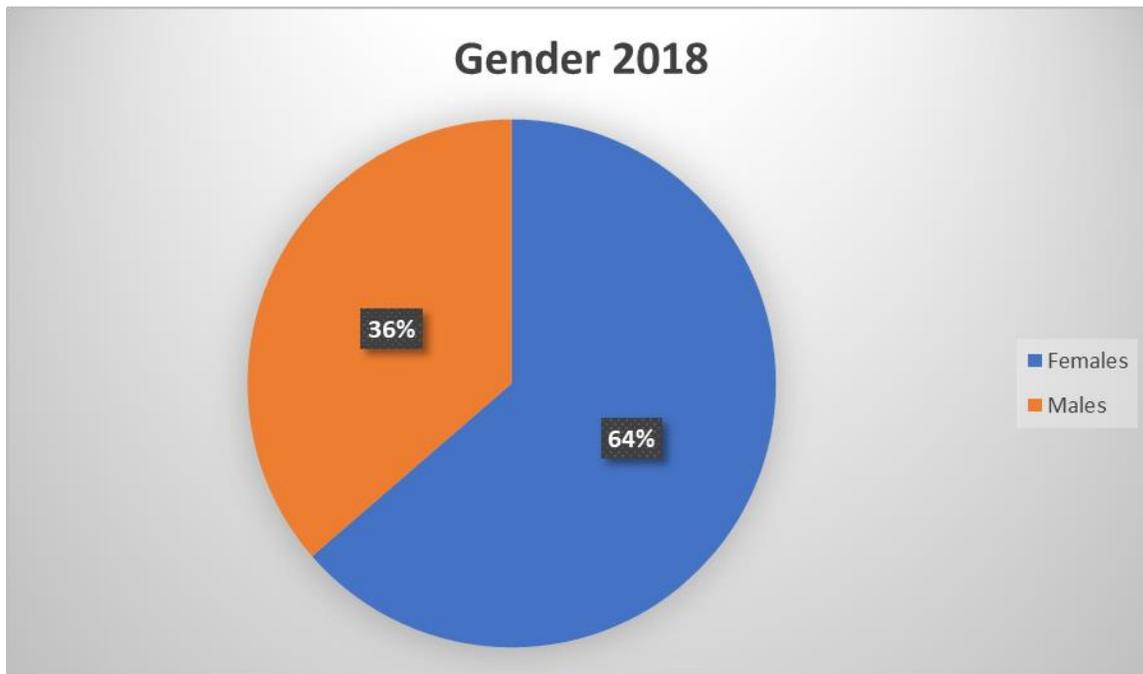
### Referrals



## Client Profiles 2018

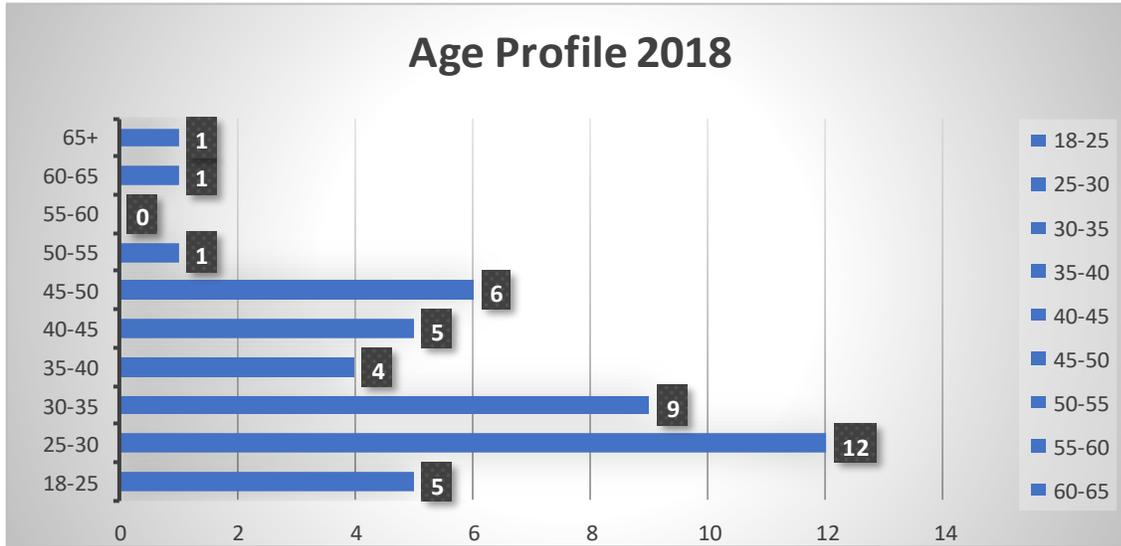
### Gender

In counselling and psychotherapy services across the board in Ireland there tends to be a higher percentage of female clients to male, though in the Traveller Counselling Service we have noted an increase in male attendance since January 2016, with female clients representing just under thirds of clients and male representing just over one third, indicating a further increase since 2017.



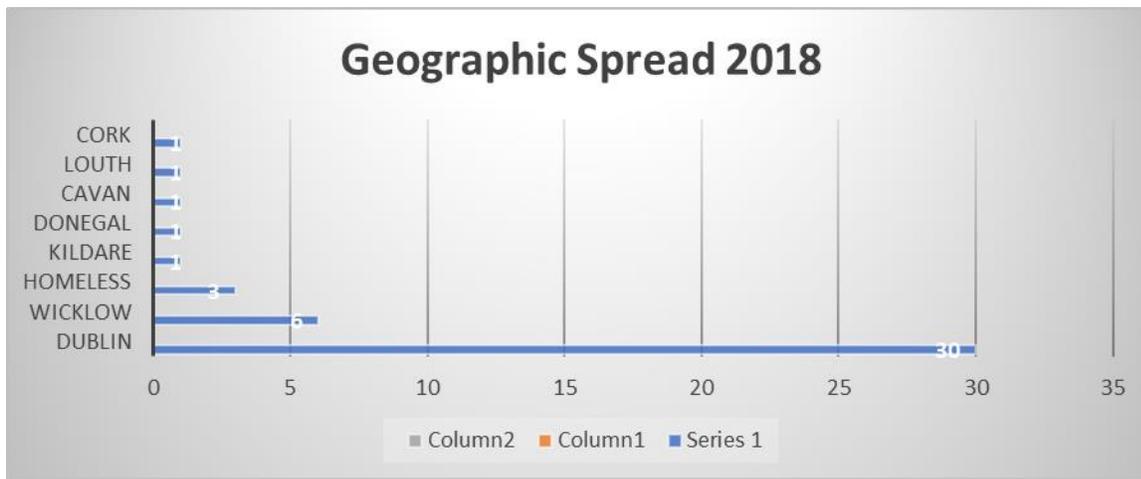
### Age Profile 2018

The figures below indicate that individuals aged between 25 – 40 represent our largest client group in terms of age ranges with fewer older Travellers attending for counselling. This statistic is replicated in mainstream counselling services also though we are pleased to note small increases with older clients attending the service.



### Geographic Spread 2018

The limited availability of our service is reflected in the statistics below. While our geographic spread has increased with the inclusion of three new counties where clients hail from, this can be explained in part to the inclusion of Dochas and Mountjoy as locations where we conduct counselling. Though a concerning figure now is the homeless figure.



## Conclusion

While the statistics indicate some positive trends, such as clients returning to the service, the number of clients self-referring and the number of clients reporting and seeking support with regard to retrospective sexual abuse, other trends are quite worrying, such as the increase in drug use and in clients experiencing or facing homelessness.

Violence continued to be a prevalent issue for our clients during 2018 though we are hopeful that our work in collaboration with the Traveller Mediation Services in 2019, and particularly our conference in April 2019, will highlight and address some of the issues that currently implicate our clients in terms of engagement in inter-family violence.

Overall, we feel that the statistics, while on the one hand give an indication of the work we are doing, or more the work the clients are doing with our support, they are quantitative, and therefore do not capture the long-term positive impact that the counselling offers to our clients.

## Financial Report

We are very pleased to say that our accounts reflect healthy balances at year end 2018.

For ease of management, we have opened a second account, from which our paid staff wages are now drawn. The original account is still used to pay the therapists.

The balances on each of these accounts respectively, on 31<sup>st</sup> December 2018 were as follows:-

Account No 1	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	20,632.28
Account No 2	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	111,005.71

Account No 2 received a payment in late December which represents funding for the first six months of the year for the salaries of the director, community development worker and the administrator.

Our finance sub-group met twice during 2018 and intend to meet four times in 2019.

## Funding Received During 2018

We are very grateful to all our funders for their support, without which, we would not be able to provide the service that we do. Funding that we received during 2018, totalling €180,800 is outlined on the table below.

One instalment of funding came for a specific project (NTMHN) and the rest was specifically for counselling or for core funding.

2018				
22/06/18	Tusla	Counselling	3,100	3,100
14/12/18	Dept of Justice	Core Funding as above	158,800	158,800
11/12/18	Community Foundation Irl	NTMHN	7,500	7,500
30/12/18	HSE Social Inclusion Unit	Counselling	11,400	11,400

## Areas of work for 2019

As we go forward there are a number of areas that have been identified that we hope to make significant progress in during 2019.

- Support the development of counselling outside Dublin
- Support local groups to put structures in place that will address the mental health needs of the local Traveller community in their areas, through the development of partnership structures between mental health services and local Traveller organisations
- Continue to develop and support the team to meet the continuing demand
- Develop the work with the Travellers in Prison Initiative
- Work in partnership with mainstream service providers at local and national level
- Continue to advocate on behalf of Travellers with regard to mental health issues
- Develop and expand policy work through making submissions on key issues in relation to Traveller mental health and particularly for the development of a national Traveller mental health strategy
- Develop a training program and a manual on cultural competency that will be rolled out in 2019 to local groups and service providers engaging with Travellers
- Develop a model for developing the capacity of local Traveller groups to engage with clients who are self-harming and/or suicidal
- Develop counselling supports for Travellers who are involved in inter-family violence
- Reach full compliance with the Governance Code
- Support the establishment of the National Traveller Mental Health Network
- Explore the development of key partnership with Universities in terms of the provision of training for Travellers
- Explore the possibility of developing an E-mental health initiative

## **Conclusion**

This report only touches on some of the areas the Traveller Counselling Service has been working on throughout the year, however, it does not represent the huge range of activities and work that all of the team have been involved in throughout 2018.

On behalf of the Traveller Counselling Service, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the team and the Board of Directors for their hard work and commitment throughout the year.

A special thanks to our supporters, funders and local and national Traveller organisations with whom we work. We look forward to your continued support in 2019.