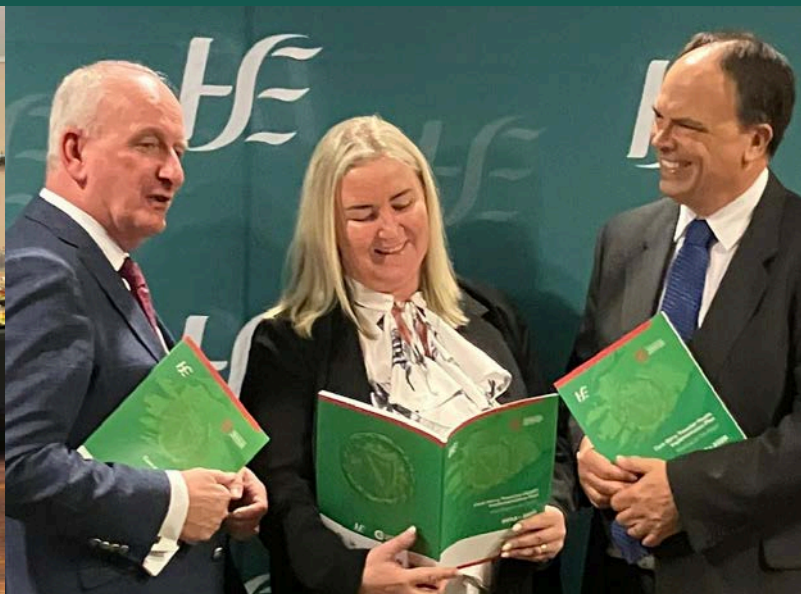




National Traveller Health Action Plan Newsletter | Spring/Summer 2024



Welcome Message from Chair of the National Traveller Health Implementation Group...



As Chairperson of the National Traveller Health Implementation Group (NTHIG), I am delighted to welcome you to the first edition of the National Traveller Health Action Plan (NTHAP) newsletter. The NTHIG was established in May 2023 to oversee and drive the implementation of NTHAP. The plan is the first of its kind and sets out to address significant inequalities in Traveller health over a five-year period.

Communicating with all NTHAP stakeholders is important to the National Traveller Health Implementation Group and we hope to produce two newsletters annually. The newsletter will bring updates on the work of the NTHIG and will feature the good work happening at RHA/CHO and national level in implementation of the plan.

In 2023, local Traveller Health Implementation plans were developed in CHO areas through extensive consultation with all stakeholders. These plans include local actions to be undertaken across CHO areas. This newsletter features some of the good work being undertaken at local level to improve Traveller health as part of these plans.

The Primary Healthcare for Traveller Projects (PHCTPs) are a key element of Traveller Health infrastructure and feature strongly in NTHAP. These projects work to enable access to health services for Travellers. They are based in Traveller organisations (and other section 39 organisations). They undertake health promotion work with the community and also advocate on Traveller health issues. They work with the HSE and other service providers to highlight the barriers to equal health outcomes that exist for Travellers. Strengthening these projects is a key priority of NTHIG over the life of the plan, and this newsletter features some of the great work undertaken by the projects.

I would like to commend all of you who are working to improve Traveller health locally. Should you wish to feature some of your work on Traveller health in the next edition of the newsletter I invite you to get in touch with us.

Warm regards,

Aisling Heffernan

Chair of the National Traveller Health Implementation Group

National Traveller Health Action Plan 2022-2027

An overview

The National-Traveller-Health-Action-Plan 2022-2027 (NTHAP) sets out to address significant inequalities in Traveller Health over a five year period. The plan describes these inequalities in detail, outlines a framework for delivery of actions and gives a picture of what successful implementation looks like. NTHAP is underpinned by the principles of Traveller Inclusion and community development (social justice, human rights, participation and collectivity). It takes a social determinants approach to health, and seeks to achieve equitable outcomes in health for the Traveller community through partnership working.

There is a strong emphasis in the plan on implementation and accountability. The plan includes a framework for implementation with a number of elements, including mainstreaming, targeting, monitoring, using a social determinants approach to health and partnership working. Key to the success of the plan is establishing a system of Ethnic Equality Monitoring across HSE.

Goal 1: Strengthen the governance, monitoring and structures to support implementation of the National Traveller Health Action Plan

Goal 2: Improve Traveller's equality of access, participation and outcomes in mainstream health services through a human-rights based approach

Goal 3: Address the social determinants of Traveller health through targeted and mainstreaming measures

Goal: Enhancing Travellers' access to culturally appropriate primary health care through investment in Traveller Health Units and Primary Health Care for Travellers Projects

Following extensive consultation and based on the findings of the AITHS, the HSE developed and launched the National Traveller Health Action Plan 2022-2027 (NTHAP) in November 2022 . It contains a series of strategic objectives and targeted actions to improve Traveller health. It focuses on supporting mainstream services to enable inclusion of Travellers through Traveller-proofing of services and training, while strengthening existing Traveller health infrastructure.

In 2023, €1.3 million recurring funding was allocated by the Department of Health to support implementation of NTHAP, with a further €500,000 once-off funding to support the development of a model to support the health of Traveller women who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless.

Once off funding of €2 million was made available through the HSE National Social Inclusion Office and Genio to support implementation of NTHAP over the first two years of the plan, this included funding for the development of CHO Traveller Health Implementation plans.

The National Traveller Health Implementation Group (NTHIG)

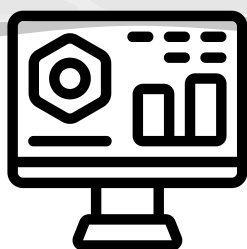
In May 2023, the National Traveller Health Implementation group (NTHIG) was established to oversee the implementation of NTHAP. In line with the principle of partnership working, the group has representatives from HSE HR, Finance, Health + Wellbeing, Mental Health, Acute Hospitals, E-Health, Public Health, National Social Inclusion as well as Traveller health networks and the National Traveller Health Advisory Forum. This provides the group with a broad range of expertise and experience to drive and support implementation of NTHAP.

- The initial focus has been on setting up systems and processes to drive implementation of the plan. NTHIG is leading out on implementation of actions that have a national focus and impact through the establishment of sub groups such as the Ethnic Equality Monitoring & Data, HR Workforce Planning and Career Progression , Finance and Resourcing, Implementation and Monitoring and the newly established Training sub-group.
- NTHIG initially prioritised strengthening of Traveller Health Infrastructure (including Traveller Health Units and PHCTPS). in 2023, funding was provided to establish two new Primary Healthcare for Traveller Projects (PHCTPs), with further funding to expand existing projects being allocated nationally.

National Traveller Health Implementation Group Sub-groups

NTHIG Ethnic Equality & Monitoring Sub-group

The **Ethnic Equality and Monitoring** sub-group was established to support implementation of action 11 of NTHAP. This action looks to implement an 'Ethnic Identifier' (EI) across all health administrative systems to track access, participation, and outcomes for all groups, including Travellers. This data will inform the development of evidence-based policy. The sub-group has also been reviewing systems to identify which currently include an EI and is consecutively developing a pathway for inclusion of a system of Ethnic Equality Monitoring in the HSE. EEM involves the process of collecting, recording and analysing patients or service users information (data). It helps to identify and measure whether our health system is serving everyone equally and ensures that our services meet the needs of a diverse population, including Ethnic Minorities.



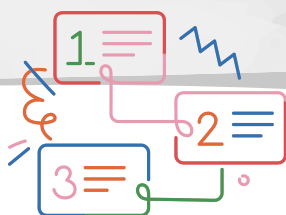
NTHIG Human resources, Workforce Planning & Career Progression Sub-group

The **Human Resources, Workforce Planning, and Career Progression** sub-group was established to drive a number of HR-related actions in NTHIG, including those related to the strengthening of Primary Health Care for Traveller Projects as a core element of the Traveller health infrastructure. In its first year, the sub-group focused on identifying and responding to barriers to recruitment and retention of staff in Primary Healthcare for Travellers Projects, in line with action 41 of NTHAP. This work included a review of the PHCTPs workforce to identify resourcing needs and work towards standardisation. Barriers identified so far include the impact on welfare entitlement when workers transition from welfare to work. The sub-group also collaborated with National Traveller MABS to develop a guide to in-work entitlements.



NTHIG Implementation & Monitoring Sub-group

The **Implementation and Monitoring** sub-group was established to help NTHIG in carrying out its role of supporting and overseeing the implementation of NTHAP. Its key aim is to monitor and support implementation of all NTHAP actions. As part of this work, it has developed monitoring frameworks for implementation of actions at both the national and CHO levels. It collaborates with other NTHIG sub-groups and CHOs to identify barriers and enablers of implementation. The sub-group reports to NTHIG at every meeting, providing updates on implementation progress and making recommendations to the national group.



NTHIG Finance & Resourcing Sub-group

The role of the **Finance and Resourcing** sub-group is to support and enable transparency and accountability in Traveller health budgets. Its key function is to track and monitor Traveller Health spending, enable financial accountability in relation to Traveller health spending and to support NTHIG in the planning of Traveller Health budgets. Prior to its establishment, there was difficulty in tracking Traveller health spending nationally across the CHOs. The sub-group has put in place a mechanism that enables tracking of spending on Traveller health across the CHOs and reports and updates NTHIG on Traveller health spending at every meeting.



The Training sub-group is currently in the beginning stages of drafting their work plan. Stay tuned for the next edition, where we will feature some of their progress...

Local Implementation of National Traveller Health Action Plan 2022- 2027



Community Healthcare West - Ethnicity Recording Project

The introduction of a system of Ethnic Equality Monitoring (EEM) is a key part of the National Traveller Health Action Plan, with action 11 looking to introduce a standardised ethnic identifier into all administrative health systems. EEM is a system that helps to identify and measure whether our health system is serving everyone equally and make sure that our services meet the needs of our diverse population. An ethnic identifier question is the first step in collecting ethnic data for use in EEM.

Caroline Canny is a CNS (Clinical Nurse Specialist) Traveller Liaison Nurse working as part of the Traveller Health Unit (THU) team in Community Healthcare West. Her role is to support and enable positive Traveller mental health. Caroline, who joined the THU in 2023, began an ethnicity recording project in January 2024. She worked closely with a student on placement to examine how ethnicity recording in mental health services in the Galway Roscommon 4 (GR4) area was being undertaken and identify the barriers to collecting ethnic data. They began the project by undertaking an audit of paper files and cross-checking with data recorded on the iPMS (Integrated Patient Management System). This was to check if ethnicity was being accurately recorded. They discovered that some may not have been recorded or may not have been transferred to the iPMS. They went about updating the iPMS to include ethnicity data that may not have transferred. The audit of files was the first step in the process in supporting the collection of ethnic data. Caroline is working with mental health colleagues to develop a pilot to see how they can improve the data collection in the GR4 area. They will then look to see how they can use the data to support Traveller access to services in the first instance. Caroline explained that they are examining the data to ascertain the level of DNAs (did not attend) and determine how they can intervene to support attendance at appointments. Improving ethnic data collection and access to services are the first steps in introducing Ethnic Equality Monitoring into mental health services, in line with the objectives of the National Traveller Health Action Plan.

Traveller Cultural Awareness Training (TCAT)



Photos from Traveller Cultural Awareness Training delivered by Cork Travellers Visibility Group and Wexford Local Development.

Action 18 of the National Traveller Health Action Plan 2022-2027 (NTHAP) aims to support the development of culturally safe services for Travellers by creating a Traveller proofing toolkit and developing a framework for delivering Traveller Cultural Awareness Training and anti-racism training.

As part of delivering this action, the National Traveller Health Implementation Group (NTHIG) has allocated funding to support the development of a framework for delivering Traveller Cultural Awareness Training for health service staff. The initiative is being led by CHO 4 Cork Kerry, which brings together TCAT providers to map the delivery of TCAT training to health services nationally.

The project aims to share good practices among Traveller-led TCAT providers, focusing on the best methods to deliver TCAT to HSE staff and ensure Traveller-inclusive services. It also seeks to identify gaps in training provision, particularly regarding the accessibility of training for staff. CHO 4 Cork Kerry is collaborating with Cork TCAT to oversee this project. Cork TCAT has established a national project working group with representatives from TCAT providers across the country to manage this initiative. They are currently in the process of recruiting a coordinator.

What's Traveller Cultural Awareness Training?



Traveller Cultural Awareness Training, led by experienced Traveller Trainers from Traveller organisations, is provided to various service providers, including Health Service Providers. This training seeks to enhance service provision by educating providers about Traveller culture, and by addressing and challenging racism and discrimination. The ultimate goal is to create inclusive services and improve equity for Travellers.

Featuring Traveller Community Health Workers



Mary B Ward is a full-time Traveller Community Health Worker (TCHW) in the Tuam region. Let's find out more about her work...

Mary B. Ward works in the Western Traveller Intercultural Centre's Primary Healthcare for Traveller Project. She is part of a team that supports the health of over 290 families in the Tuam region by providing information and advocacy. The team guides Traveller families to relevant services and agencies for health screening, supports and interventions. Additionally, their work includes promoting Cervical Checks; Breast Checks; Child Development and Immunisation; Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Scheme; Healthy Heart; and Mental Health Awareness, Asthma and wellness in pregnancy.

Mary initially worked part-time as a Traveller Community Health worker but recently transitioned into a full-time role when the opportunity arose in November of 2023. Mary reflects positively on the shift, noting its benefits for both herself and the PHCTP. This change has also proven beneficial for Kathleen Ward, the Primary Health Care Coordinator, who was previously the only full-time staff member on the project team.

When asked about what aspects of her job she likes best, Mary says she takes pride in promoting Traveller culture and working with mainstream services to raise awareness about the issues affecting Travellers. She also enjoys advocating for Traveller representation and ensuring that Traveller voices are heard in decisions regarding Traveller health.

Mary also works as part of a larger team in Western Travellers that organises community events. Recently, her efforts have focused on strengthening connections with other local organisations, including the local library.



Bridgie Collins has been a Traveller Community Health Worker at Pavee Point for over 30 years. Let's find out more about her role...

The Primary Healthcare for Travellers Project (PHCTP) at Pavee Point comprises 16 Traveller women who work with over 300 families in the North Dublin region, amounting to over 1,200 individual Travellers. The project was the first PHCTP in the country, established in 1994, and it has since been replicated across the country. The work of the project is underpinned by a community development approach, which includes principles of social justice, solidarity, equality, and human rights. This approach involves participation, empowerment, and collective action. The project is informed by a social determinants of health analysis, and Traveller Community Health Workers undertake health advocacy in various health arenas, primarily through outreach work.

Bridgie reflects on starting with the PHCTP, "I believe that Primary Health Care for Travellers is one of the best things that has ever happened for my community, because we were Travellers and we knew what our community needed."

However, it was difficult in the beginning as it was a new project and funders were not convinced that Travellers, especially those with limited literacy, could work on the ground. She recalls how the PHCTP had to think about the best ways to approach families at the start: "I was part of the team who carried out the first needs assessment at the beginning of the project in the 1990s. At that time, there were 85 families in Finglas and we went out and asked Travellers about their health, their needs and issues. At first, people were wary and didn't know what we were trying to do but by explaining to Travellers who we were and what we were there to do, it helped to build trust. It also showed the Health Board that we could do the work and that we were badly needed on the ground."

One of the proudest moments of Bridgie's career was gathering data for the All Ireland Traveller Healthcare Study (AITHS, 2010). She recalls the shock at the results from both the Travellers who took part and the HSE and other health services: "The HSE in particular were shocked that PHCTP workers had collected so much information, even though most of us could not read or write. I was able to tell other people about the results because I knew that the pyramid wasn't right, it was the shape of a Christmas tree and that meant we were a young population, with very little older people. So we had our own way of communicating those messages."

Bridgie enjoys the knowledge-sharing aspect of the role, and seeing the project grow nationwide: "I have given talks and training to new PHC projects with others who have worked on the project since the start." she says. Bridgie's success in her role, and the success of the other older women in the PHCTP, has resulted in lasting positive outcomes on Traveller health. "Travellers are linking in with services now themselves. That's because of our work. We've saved lives, and are continuing to save lives of people in our community. You saw through COVID-19 the important work we did to protect Travellers, including the most vulnerable. We've done very good work and there's more to be done."

Remembering Sheila Reilly, Pavee Point Traveller and Roma Centre Primary Healthcare worker...

‘She had good times with us and we had with her. She used to love going out and doing the groundwork and meeting people.’



Pictured above: (Upper Left) 19.4.1989. Galway, Salthill. Sheila Reilly with other Travellers in Salthill following a visit by DTEDG (Dublin Travellers Education and Development Group) to the Travellers Fairgreen Co-op in Galway. ©Photo by Derek Speirs; (Upper right) Sheila Reilly with other members of the Primary Healthcare Team; (Lower left) Sheila Reilly, colleagues, family, and President Michael D Higgins at Pavee.

In January 2024, Sheila Reilly, who had been working as a Traveller Community Health Worker in the Primary Health Care Project for almost thirty years, passed away. Sheila was a huge part of Pavee Point Traveller and Roma Centre. She was committed to bringing positive change for Travellers and never faltered in her dedication. She was among the women who identified Traveller health as a key area of focus and was part of the first Traveller Primary Health Care Project established in 1994, which aimed to set up a model of Traveller participation in the promotion of health.

Sheila was committed to Traveller rights and equality and dedicated her life to ensuring Traveller women's right to health. Sheila built up the trust and respect of Travellers and was able to help bring about major changes in the areas of health education, women's reproductive health, child health, vaccinations and screenings.

Some of her fellow TCHWs recalled that 'Once, she went to the Well Woman Clinic with Missy and one of the other women, she was afraid to go in. But they got her in. She found out then that she had breast cancer. But, thanks spare our lady, everything went well for her. She got the all clear and had many more years'. She'd always sit down with the group and say to us 'Well if only for ye women, I wouldn't be here. It was a good job you brought me over to the Well Woman clinic. And all them young and auld women now, should get up and go to the Well Woman clinic and get checked.' Which was right because Travellers never used to go for a check up, and now they do."

Photographs: Derek Speirs

New Primary Health Care Project in East Limerick



PHECC qualified First Aid Responders

The National Traveller Health Implementation Group has prioritised strengthening Traveller Health Infrastructure as a key area of focus for the NTHAP implementation. In 2023, funding was awarded to CHO 3, which includes Clare, Limerick, North Tipperary, and East Limerick, to support the development of a Primary Healthcare for Traveller Project (PHCTP) in the East Limerick area. This brings the total number of PHCTPs in the region to five.

The Ballyhoura Development Company is the sponsor of the new project, which was established in September 2023. Initial efforts have focused on staff recruitment, training and building a profile within the community. The team consists of a PHCTP coordinator and 11 part-time Traveller Community Health Workers.

The team is now beginning its work in the community, already visiting local Traveller families to provide health information. Their first health information session took place on April 18th, where members of the Traveller community met with a local HSE diabetes nurse for complimentary blood sugar checks and learned more about health-related matters.



The PHCTP staff also hosted an event as part of Traveller Pride Week. On May 28th, community members gathered for a day of traditional crafts, music, and bread baking.



10th National Traveller and Roma Men's Health Day at the Phoenix Park

On Wednesday, 12th June, members of the Traveller and Roma community from across the country met for the 10th annual Traveller and Roma Men's Health Day in Phoenix Park, hosted by the Men's Health team in the ERTHU. Over 200 men gathered to link with mainstream health services and receive free health checks. Many Traveller men often avoid health checks due to mistrust and insufficient information about health services. Bridging the gap between men and health services is crucial for fostering a sense of empowerment and boosting self-esteem. A football tournament is held as part of the day, and this year, Brian Kerr attended in support of the event.

NTHAP Local Launches



Pictured above: . (Left) Launch of Cork Kerry Traveller health Implementation Plan, (Middle): Bernard Gloster CEO, HSE, Andy Philips, HSE REO, Dublin South Region and Breda O'Donoghue of Cork Traveller Visibility Group , Right; Martin Ward, Manager Bru Bhríde, Tuam and Caroline Canny, Clinical Nurse Specialist, HSE Traveller Health Liaison at launch of CHO west Traveller Health Implementation Plan.

In early 2023, the consultation process began to develop Traveller Health Implementation Plans on a CHO level. Seven plans were developed and, since then, CHOs have launched their local plans to promote their work on Traveller health. As pictured above, on February 29th, members of the Traveller community in the Cork and Kerry regions met for the launch of their local action plan titled 'Missling on the Tobar'. The gathering saw the presence of representatives from six Traveller organisations as well as HSE CEO Bernard Gloster and HSE South West Regional Executive Officer Andy Phillips. This comprehensive plan outlines key health priorities for Travellers, highlighting years of partnership and collaboration.

Also addressed in this event were the impact of lifelong discrimination and racism experienced by Travellers, as well as the effects of poor accommodation and barriers to education. Following the event, Bernard Gloster acknowledged the success of the launch posting, "Travellers have experienced numerous health challenges, some of which have seen improvement, yet our journey ahead remains extensive. This plan symbolizes our collective commitment to pressing forward." As pictured above, members of the Traveller community in the Western region also met for the launch of their plan which took place in the Summer of 2023.

Chair of NTHIG Visits Pavee Point



Partnership is a core tenet of the NTHAP, ensuring improved health outcomes for Travellers across the board. In line with this, on Thursday, May 30th, NTHIG Chairperson Aishling Heffernan visited Pavee Point to learn more about the current programmes offered at the centre.

Launch of the “Working Entitlements Guide for Community Health Workers”

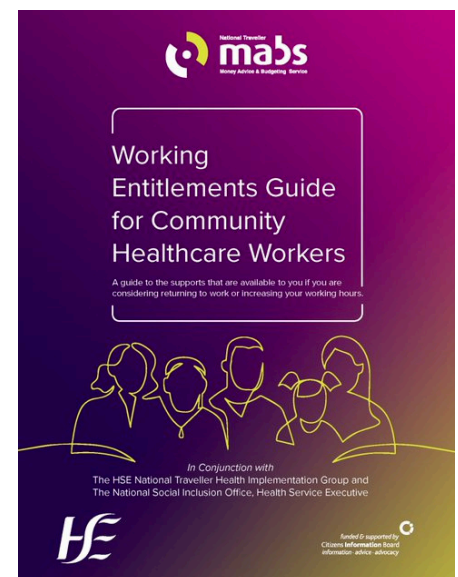


Pictured above: Yvonne Moore, HSE HR Primary Care Lead, speaks at the launch of the “Working Entitlements Guide for Community Health Workers”

On the 13th of May, National Traveller MABS launched an information resource guide to in-work entitlements. The guide aims to support Travellers in making informed decisions about taking up a new post as a Traveller Community Health Worker, remaining in their current position, or taking on additional hours of work. Action 41 of the NTHAP seeks to "Explore the Barriers to Recruitment and Retention of Staff in Primary Health Care for Traveller Projects (PHCTPs)." The issue of recruitment and retention in PHCTPs was extensively raised during the consultation processes for the development of NTHAP. Often there are many barriers in relation to the loss of welfare entitlements for Travellers taking up or remaining in employment in PHCTPs which has a significant impact on staffing.

To address this, the HR Workforce Planning and Career Progression sub-group of NTHIG is undertaking a number of pieces of work to address. They engaged Traveller Community Health Workers in discussions on their information needs regarding welfare entitlements. A working group was set-up, comprising HRWPCP sub-group members, National Traveller MABS, South Dublin MABS and Traveller Community Health Workers.

National Traveller MABS developed a comprehensive guide outlining all entitlements available to individuals who are working. This guide includes detailed information on the Department of Social Welfare's online tool, the 'Benefit of Work Estimator,' which allows recipients of Job Seekers or Lone Parents payments to calculate how taking up employment or increasing their hours of work will impact their benefits. The guide is accessible on the National Traveller MABS website.



Are you interested in learning more about Traveller health?

Do you want to support Traveller inclusion in health services?

The following HSEland training modules and online information are available to support staff in gaining an understanding of Traveller health needs and may be useful to you when planning your services.

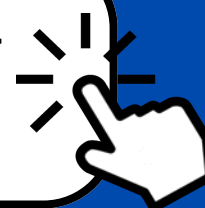


[Introduction to Traveller Health](#)

[Introduction to Ethnic Equality Monitoring](#)



Click here for an introductory webinar on **Ethnic Equality Monitoring**



The Social Determinants of Traveller Women's Health

If you are interested in learning about the impact of the social determinants of health on Traveller women's food and exercise choices, the Southern Traveller Health Network has developed a useful video. Please click on the photo or follow the link below.

[Click here!](#)

