

Cork City Interagency Traveller Group

Developing a Coordination of Services Model to Support Travellers at the Hollyhill Halting Site

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We intended to maintain a sensitive but robust approach to data collection and analysis, and were ably assisted in this task through the critical interest and involvement of voluntary and community sector agencies (Appendix B), networks and individual Travellers. We value their cooperation and support throughout the period of research and facilitation.

This report could not have been completed without informed and substantive assistance from many individual stakeholders, who have maintained vital interest in the issues affecting Travellers at Hollyhill; to you we owe a profound debt of gratitude.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. Commissioned by Cork City Traveller Interagency Group, this report represents the outcome of research and facilitation services undertaken to identify and develop a coordination model which would improve the condition of Traveller families residing at the Hollyhill Halting Site.
2. The report has three parts, each containing multiple sections. Part One consists of the executive summary, introduction, and methodology. Part Two contains a statement of the resource input to Hollyhill, an examination of barriers to coordination, and options for developing a best practice coordination model. Part Three sets out conclusions and recommendations.
3. The research brief called for the following: i) a need to identify the resources (including staff) which each agency makes available; ii) any institutional barriers to coordination; iii) integrated working and what statutory and voluntary agencies can and cannot bring to the process; iv) consultation with Travellers living on the halting Site; v) a series of feasible proposals towards building a model that would ensure coordination and improvements for Travellers at Knocknaheeny.
4. We noted gaps in the data apparently based either on the maintenance of imprecise records on the actual level of finances going in, or where resources were applied through generic budgets. On this basis, the total resource put into the Hollyhill Halting Site, however, is reckoned to be in the region of €388,460 over the period 2007-2008. It is targeted at 12 families, including 53 children, who are resident in twelve bays on the Site. Approximately 17 statutory, voluntary and community sector agencies are associated with service provision.
5. The coordination of services is affected by institutional, Traveller, community and voluntary sector barriers. This is evidenced by a lack of trust, confidence, accountability and effective communication; 17 different agencies with many different and/or uncoordinated agendas; the absence of a single regular forum in which all agencies could build relationships, support each other, and deliver change by implementing and evaluating best practice; inconsistent and ineffectual interagency working and the absence of a common vision and strategy; apparent sector jealousies illustrated by the comment, 'these are our Travellers'; institutional resistance to provision of support for horse projects or horse keeping, and Traveller fears about being 'forced' into standard accommodation without recognition of their cultural traditions.
6. The main barriers with respect to Travellers include distrust between Travellers and some agencies, inter-Traveller conflict and tension; Traveller absorption of public discriminatory attitudes; lack of Traveller involvement where poor self-esteem and deficient self-confidence are factors; insufficient regard for the importance of education; and the impact of tensions around income support.

7. While it is recognised that an effective coordination model requires time and effort by all agencies concerned, we set out an options analysis based on the evidence (2.1.6; 2.2; 2.3) which provides the basic structural and operational elements that could lead to the development of a best practice coordination model. These include:

- ❖ convening a consultation which brings together all statutory, voluntary and community sector agencies, Travellers and Traveller representatives, as a first step;
- ❖ the HSE and Cork City Council meeting to reconsider how the strategic development and collaboration based on the legislative requirements for interagency working could be progressed, while developing and maintaining a common vision and driving forward a strategy;
- ❖ convening statutory, community and voluntary sector agencies, Traveller representatives and Travellers in a regular forum to facilitate debate, agree approaches, and develop an integrated approach;
- ❖ redeploying resources to cultivate the model, for example, support training for literate or semi-literate Traveller women and men to enable their engagement in interagency processes.

8. Recommendations

Cork City Interagency Traveller Group (CCITG)

The CCITG should consider the appointment of independent personnel to plan and deliver a major consultation on its behalf, involving all Hollyhill Traveller stakeholders, with an agenda structured around the main issues raised in this report (2.4.3).

The CCITG should revisit the interagency structure at the high level to identify gaps and inefficiencies and remedy these as a way of encouraging and ensuring greater participation and representation at the local community level (1.2; 2.2.2.1).

The HSE and Cork City Council should explore together how they can work transparently to promote cooperation, and drive forward the coordination of services at different levels through an effective interagency structure (3.1.10).

Community and Voluntary Sector Agencies

Community and voluntary sector agencies should work together to establish greater levels of trust and confidence, and demonstrate respect for Hollyhill Travellers as equals (2.2.4.1-2.2.4.2).

All stakeholders should consider the merits of a lead agency as a core element in the development of a sustainable model of coordination, which should work with

all parties to take forward a common vision which leads to actual sustainable outcomes for the Travellers (2.4.8; 2.3.6.2).

Public, Community and Voluntary Sector Agencies

All agencies should practically and visibly work together to build an ethos based on strong community developmental principles that aim to promote the immediate and longer term well being of Hollyhill Travellers (1.2.1); stakeholders should establish at the earliest opportunity a regular forum, with sensitive, independent focused leadership, drawing either on existing structures or creating a new dedicated ones that include Hollyhill Travellers.

Travellers

Travellers at Hollyhill should undertake and seize the benefits of training and education designed to help them participate in decision-making structures, improve their health, social care, accommodation, physical environment, and employment prospects.

PART ONE: RESEARCH FRAMEWORK

1.1 Introduction

1.1.1 The Cork City Interagency Traveller Group (CCITG) commissioned AW Trotman Associates to 'carry out research and facilitation work in order to identify the best way of co-ordinating the delivery of client-centred services to residents of the Hollyhill Halting Site'. This report is the result of that brief which sought to identify a coordination model 'to support and facilitate services provided by the statutory, community and voluntary [sectors], and improve the supports available to Travellers living on a halting Site'.¹

1.1.2 The report has three parts, each comprising multiple sections. Part One contains the introduction (1.1), background (1.2), and the methodology by which the research has been conducted (1.3). Part Two has four sections: an assessment of agency resource input to Travellers at Hollyhill (2.1); identification of barriers attributable to public, community and voluntary sector agencies (2.2), barriers with respect to Travellers (2.3); and an options analysis (2.4). In Part Three we draw conclusions (3.1) and make recommendations (3.2) for the development of a sustainable model. Three appendices include a sample general questionnaire used for data collection, a list of all agencies associated with Hollyhill, and an indicative agenda for the proposed consultation.

1.1.3 Throughout the research process we sought objectivity and factual inputs from all stakeholders. During the course of realising this objective, we collected high quality information consistent with a fully independent consultancy approach and the pivotal demands which the background to this project anticipated.

1.2 Background

1.2.1 The Report of the High Level Group on Traveller Issues,² approved by Government in 2006, recommended that relevant statutory agencies improve outcomes of delivery of services to Travellers through interagency co-operation on the practical delivery of services and supports for Travellers. Consequently, each City and County Development Board appointed a Traveller Interagency Group to co-ordinate the development of Traveller-related services and supports at local level, and to draw up Integrated Strategic Plans for service delivery to Travellers. In Cork City, a representative steering group and working groups were formed around four main themes – including accommodation and health.

¹ Cork City Interagency Traveller Group: *Tender*, p. 1.

² Report of the High Level Group on Traveller Issues, March 2006 (HLG).
<http://www.justice.ie/en/JELR/HLGReport.pdf/Files/HLGReport.pdf>

1.2.2 The main requirements the Health and Accommodation Working Group (HAWG) set out for this project, both in terms of outcomes and breadth of exercise, have guided and enabled us to pursue the most effective route towards constructing a coordinated model for client-centred service delivery.

1.2.3 We have included the research elements set out in the tender:

- identification of resources (including staff) each agency makes available to residents on the Site;
- identification of any institutional barriers to co-ordination and integrated working, and clarity around what each agency can and cannot bring to the process;
- ‘meaningful’ consultation with Travellers living on the halting Site; and
- recommendations for a model to ensure future co-ordination and improve support to families living on the Site.³

1.3 Methodology

1.3.1 In consultation with the HAWG we refined the research process and approach, and agreed the method of contact used with Traveller families at Knocknaheeny. The group also identified stakeholder voluntary and community sector agencies and the issues considered crucial to the search for a sustainable coordination model.

1.3.2 We primarily utilised qualitative data collection sources and analysis, given a stakeholder group comprising only 12 Traveller families and some 17 agencies working with families on the Site. We conducted 15 in-depth personal interviews with representatives or leaders of the statutory, voluntary and community sector agencies by use of a structured interview format, and/or attended key network or stakeholder meetings. Two focus groups with Travellers were held, and telephone interviews were conducted with other voluntary and community sector agencies. Stakeholders contacted include:

- ❖ Health and Accommodation Working Group
- ❖ Cork Traveller Women’s Network
- ❖ Focus group with Traveller men
- ❖ Focus group with Traveller women
- ❖ HSE, Springboard
- ❖ Individual Travellers at Hollyhill
- ❖ Orga Chorcai
- ❖ RAPID
- ❖ St Mary’s on the Hill Primary School
- ❖ St Vincent de Paul
- ❖ Traveller Visibility Group
- ❖ We the People

³ *Tender*, 10 December 2007.

We circulated among statutory and voluntary sector agencies a structured general questionnaire (Appendix A) which sought to identify the role each agency performs, and the resources being deployed. Consultants found that a proportion of smaller voluntary and community sector agencies active at Knocknaheeny could not provide full and detailed information or data sets because of limited capacity or other organisational practices. This limitation, however, did not diminish robustness or the quality of our work.

1.3.3 Importantly, some agencies have committed resources to Hollyhill as a proportion of generic budgets earmarked for Knocknaheeny in general, and not through the provision of dedicated staff or specific budget heads. This is reflected in the chart (Table 1) below. Where it was clear that resources were dedicated to Hollyhill, however, we have gathered and analysed the relevant information.

1.3.4 Consultants conducted a review of all accessible relevant literature⁴ in order to build an accurate picture of policy impacts, approaches and barriers. This review also helped to clarify agency resource commitments to the Site.

1.3.5 In order to be inclusive we sought the views of the 12 Traveller families on service reception through meetings with individual Travellers and in two focus groups: one with Traveller men which was well attended by seven, and one with Traveller women, less well attended by two women. In addition, we remained flexible and opened to accommodate Travellers' unscheduled meetings with us at short notice and visited the Site twice, all of which sought to ensure their fullest participation in the consultation process. We have, for example, interviewed three Traveller women individually from three different families.

1.3.6 During our focus group with Traveller men, an invitation was extended to join another focus group, convened by a researcher working in an adjacent room with Traveller women seeking to identify Travellers' needs. Clearly we had no prior knowledge, but the opportunity enabled us to clarify - for that group - the nature and extent of our assignment, which removed the obvious fears of professional conflict associated with possible territorial unease. This occurrence was symptomatic, nevertheless, of the difficulties regarding service delivery and coordination (2.2.2.3), which our findings extensively illustrate.

⁴ Cork City Council, *Traveller Accommodation Programme 2005-2008*, Housing & Community Directorate, February 2005, (TAP); Health Service Executive, *your HSE guide*, North Lee – Cork, September 2007; Southern Health Board, *A Study of Traveller Experiences of the services in the Southern Health Board Area*, December 2001; Exodea Europe, *Improving Local and Community Development, Structures and Programmes*, Final report, April 2008 (*Making it Work*); Robbie McVeigh, *The 'Final Solution': Reformism, Ethnicity Denial and the Politics of Anti-Travellerism in Ireland*.

PART TWO: ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

2.1 Agency resource input

2.1.1 There are approximately 17 statutory, community and voluntary sector agencies (Appendix B) associated with service provision to the 12 families at the Hollyhill Traveller Halting Site, but not all are aware of the work being done or resources committed by others. This has to some degree determined outcomes and the level of coordination, hence, the need to identify resources deployed.

2.1.2 Resource commitment and roles performed by all agencies identified here are based on accessible data sources, but a number of voluntary sector agencies are – at the time of writing – still to define or quantify their roles. Others deploy only human resources to Hollyhill as an unspecified share of a wider role.

2.1.3 Sources of funding such as grant awards to community and voluntary sector agencies remain relatively unclear in some cases. A lack of knowledge about resource input is thought by some voluntary agencies to contribute to work being done in isolation, to the build up of tensions, gaps, overlap and duplication.

2.1.4 Identification and application of resources as a step towards better coordination has been attempted with integrity as evidenced by two meetings the HAWG hosted. In October 2006, the HAWG, through the Interagency Service Plans for Cork City, set out to encourage

‘better coordination of actions to improve environmental health conditions on the halting sites through clarity regarding roles and responsibilities of agencies’.⁵

The Hollyhill Traveller Halting Site was chosen as a pilot for this activity, which included a joint workshop on concerns about Traveller children’s education. A number of agencies actively participated, e.g., St Mary on the Hill Primary school, the Visiting Teacher for Travellers Service, Traveller parents, and other service providers. The Minute recorded the result as ‘a marked increase in school attendance by children from the halting site’ (Minutes, 6 October 06).

2.1.5 The present complexities indicate that coordinated action of this nature can be helpful if applied on a strategic and consistent basis. While the categories of agencies set out in the Minutes illustrate the roles performed, collaboration among them is not entirely obvious. A second meeting, for example, was called in January 2007, when a ‘structure for support and interventions’ was proposed, but this was not continued as an ongoing interagency process.⁶

⁵ Minutes, Cork City Integrated Plan for Travellers, Health and Accommodation Working Group – Facilitated Session 26th October 2006 (Minutes, October 06).

2.1.6 The structure proposed, however, included two support models for Hollyhill Travellers which appeared to have had real merit despite their focus on individual families. Nevertheless, it was thought that this proposal would undermine an existing role carried by one service provider, and was, therefore, not implemented. As reflected in the Minutes, clearly, better coordination was envisaged,⁷ but the organisations involved appeared not to have achieved their goal. The agencies and roles included:

1. Organisations with a broad brief
 - Orga Chorcai
 - Cork City Council Social Worker for Travellers
 - “We the People” Community Development Project
 - St. Vincent de Paul

2. Health
 - Community Health Worker
 - Community Work Department
 - Public Health Nursing
 - Community Welfare
 - Social Worker
 - Environmental Health
 - Traveller Health Unit

It is clear today that the 17 agencies do not explicitly share a common vision or strategy, nor is a feasible organisational structure evident. This has produced barriers and reinforced the need for coordinated engagement at all levels.

⁶ Minutes, Cork City Council Integrated Plan for Travellers, Documentation from Session held 23rd January 07, p. 3 (Minutes January 07).

⁷ Minutes, October 2006, pp. 3-4.

Table 1
Resource Allocation to Hollyhill/Knocknaheeny Travellers Halting Site 2007/2008

	Agency	Staff and roles	Resources allocated €	Total €	Current Status
1	Barnardos (see note 4, p. 14)			-	New to Knocknaheeny (May 2008)
2	Cork City Council	(see note 1, p. 14)		112,000	Active
3	City of Cork VEC	Family Learning/ back to education	2,794	23,394	Active
		Women's Tuesday Group	2,150		
		Men's carpentry/Education	7,606		
		Adult Basic Education	5,844		
		Resource Worker	5,000		
4	Cork Traveller Women's Network	Community Development/ Outreach worker		2,000	Active
5	Dept of Education & Science	Visiting Teacher for Travellers		-	Active
6	Education Welfare Board	Community Welfare Officer		-	Active
7	Family Centre	Public Health Nurse		-	Active
8	Health Service Executive (HSE) (see note 2, p. 14)	Childcare Manager		100,000	Active
		Community Health Worker			
		Community Welfare Officer			
		Senior Social Worker			
		Environmental Health Officer			
		Primary Health Care Coordinator			
		Public Health Nurse			
		Public health nurse			
9	Ogra Chorcai		VEC	10,000	Active
10	Write Together			-	Active
11	Springboard			7,000	Active
12	St Finbarr's Senior Traveller Training Centre			-	Active
13	St Mary's on the Hill	Home School Community Liaison	HSE	6,444	Active
14	St Vincent de Paul			9,225	Active
15	Terence McSwiney College	Principal		5,000	Active
		Traveller Support Teacher			
		Home School Community Liaison			
16	Traveller Visibility Group		HSE	110,397	Active
17	We the People CDP	Co-ordinator		3,000	Active
	TOTAL (see note 3, p. 14)			388,460	

2.1.7 The specific roles and services in respect of Hollyhill amount to a resource in the region of €388,460. Balanced against need and the lack of clear evidence of substantive outcomes, this represents a sizeable commitment. Nevertheless, these resources do not obscure gaps in service provision which might effectively be addressed by statutory agencies developing *inter alia* an unambiguous and comprehensive business case for Travellers at Hollyhill.

Gaps in application of resources

2.1.8 As we consider gaps, two areas of difficulty arise: one, inaccessibility to full and adequate information sources that indicate precisely where gaps remain, and how use of resources are applied; two, most agencies attached to the Site confirmed that work is done almost exclusively of any strategic engagement with other agencies at community level. One stakeholder confirmed this by commenting: '**we come across people**'. In effect, the voluntary and statutory agencies do not appear to collaborate systematically on a common purpose or agreed strategy with Travellers at Hollyhill. A remark by one respondent is fairly typical:

'At present, it looks to me that all agencies may meet to discuss the issues, but as far as working together is concerned I have no information of any collaborative approach. I have worked delivering services in the community so I have been in contact with many agencies, but we don't plan anything together'.

2.1.9 More effective interagency working, assisted by adequately trained personnel with a community development outlook would assist both statutory and voluntary agencies to work more objectively and transparently. This would also help each to offer mutual support towards achieving a common goal. One contributor acknowledged:

'For long term development to be effective, we need to be aware that we all bring our personal prejudices and issues into any interaction with the people we are serving'.

While outside the scope of our research, all respondents agreed about the most urgent continuing needs at Knocknaheeny: education, childcare places, accommodation. Almost all, including Traveller women, regard these as 'the number one issues', which require attention by service providers. The fact that some attempts are being made to address these is completely obscured by prevailing conditions and the lack of transparency.

2.1.10 Taking the estimates given for each agency, any lack of coordination and consistent service provision is clearly not due to the absence of resources. On the contrary, where these could be administered in a focused and strategic manner, it is probable that effective and sustainable outcomes would be achieved.

2.1.11 Summary

Issues arising from analysis of resources input:

- ❖ unavailability or inaccessibility to complete information on sources and application of financial resources;
- ❖ an apparently adequate resource of approximately €388,460 has been put in over the period 2007-2008;
- ❖ 12 families with 53 children are resident in 12 bays on the Site;
- ❖ 17 agencies are associated with service provision;
- ❖ attempts at better coordination were unsuccessful;
- ❖ coordination is either patchy or non-existent, and strained relationships persist among some agencies;
- ❖ need for effective interagency working, assisted by adequately trained personnel with a community development outlook;
- ❖ the main gaps in service provision appear in relation to education, childcare, and accommodation.

Notes to chart

1. This figure was described by the authority as 'a fairly accurate estimate' of the 2007 expenditure on the Hollyhill Halting Site. It includes money spent on general maintenance, provision of skips, pest control services, caretaker's salary, City Council Traveller Social Worker's salary, and drain cleaning.

2. The HSE provides funding and human resources through grant aid, and by applying financial resources as unspecified amounts from generic budgets. Generic budgets are intended to meet the health needs of the Hollyhill/Knocknaheeny area generally. Therefore, this figure is an informed estimate. Springboard also provides generic services as well as the pilot project to Knocknaheeny.

3. This total represents an aggregate of the estimated amounts from generic budgets for work with Travellers at Hollyhill. Figures were supplied by the different agencies concerned, and confirmed by their personnel. Any service provision to Traveller families at the Site, including roles noted in the chart is made through such budgets.

4. Where figures are omitted in the chart, either these were not supplied or did not come to hand to meet the deadline for final version of this report.

2.2 Barriers to Coordination – Statutory, community and voluntary sector agencies

2.2.1 In this section we list and consider some of the main barriers to coordination which our research shows can exist between community and voluntary sector agencies, and public and voluntary sector agencies and Travellers. Barriers are measured against the background of Cork City Interagency Traveller Group's (CCITG) acknowledgment of the need for effective working relationships among all stakeholders. In relation to accommodation provision, for example, this principle is noted in the TAP, which states:

'To improve working relationships between various state organisations, voluntary groups, Traveller representative organisations and Travellers generally, Cork City Council will, in conjunction with the other agencies, promote a holistic and integrated service approach to meet traveller needs'.⁸

2.2.2 Interagency working

2.2.2.1 Many voluntary sector agencies stated that, for the most part, 'there is no interagency work being done despite the existence of the interagency group'. The interagency structure has the influence of the High Level Group on Traveller Issues which recognised this model as vital to progress.⁹ Work being attempted, however, can be problematic, i) because of the paucity of information distribution and communications between the agencies, and ii) a fundamental lack of structural organisation in the absence of effective interagency working on the ground.

2.2.2.2 We are aware, however, that some important interagency work based on the legislation¹⁰ is being done at policy level, for example, meetings through structures (2.2.1.14) such as:

- ❖ the High Level Group on Traveller Issues which oversees a number of pilot projects to improve services for Travellers at local level;
- ❖ Cork City Interagency Traveller Group;
- ❖ the Health and Accommodation sub group;
- ❖ RAPID; and
- ❖ the Knocknaheeny Traveller Women's Network.

⁸ TAP, p. 20.

⁹ HLG, p. 9.

¹⁰ The Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act 1998 required local authorities to take reasonable steps to secure the implementation of Traveller Accommodation programmes. The Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act, 2002 - trespass law - was introduced and prevented Travellers from being nomadic, and which ensured that hundreds of Travellers awaiting permanent accommodation were forcibly moved on with no alternative accommodation.

While it is thought by some stakeholders that the interagency structure needs to be more effective, work with Traveller families at Hollyhill is being done albeit through limited cooperation (2.2.2.13). Statutory and voluntary sector agencies sometimes work relatively independently or in small groups around specific issues as these arise. This *ad hoc* approach has many roots.

'These are our Travellers'

2.2.2.3. Firstly, the attitude some voluntary sector agencies displays towards Hollyhill Travellers is typified by a comment repeated during the research process: **'these are our Travellers'**, one stakeholder exclaimed when addressing the roles each agency perform. Another respondent remarked: **'they appear to be everyone's Travellers, and nobodies Travellers'**. These significant comments imply that work being done has to be jealously guarded by the agency concerned, an outlook apparently associated with 'territorial or personal reasons' (2.2.5.1). In terms of an ethos, the effect among different agencies, nevertheless, cannot be underestimated. *Ad hoc* and evidently defensive postures can alienate and weaken an already tenuous makeup. A more constructive and professional move towards (2.2.2.6) sustainable solutions is crucial.

Holistic ethos

2.2.2.4 Secondly, whether perception or reality, the ethos which underpins community development principles and affirmed by the High Level Group¹¹ is at stake. On the one hand, it might be asked whether the culture is informed by legal compliance, or is community development work being characterised by an attitude of the 'gatekeeper', that is, groups protecting their own interests? An ethos built around strong community developmental principles promoting Traveller well being could provide a secure basis for key performance (1.2.1).

2.2.2.5 Yet, successful coordination - where all agencies communicate efficiently, avoid unnecessary overlap or leave gaps in service provision - will emerge only from proficient and harmonized service delivery backed by respect among all stakeholders. This needs to be underpinned by a common vision and best practice across all agencies.¹² The White Paper on Supporting Voluntary Activity 2000, the Improving Local and Community Development Final Report, defines community participation as, 'a process by which people are able to become actively and genuinely involved in defining the issues of concern to them, in making decisions about factors that affect their lives, in formulating and implementing principles, in planning, developing and delivering services, and taking action to achieve change'.¹³

¹¹ HLG, p. 13.

¹² See EXODEA Europe, *Making it Work*, Community Participation and Representation, Summary Document, March 2008, p. 14 (*Making it Work*).

¹³ *Making it Work*, p. 7. This is also consistent with the HSE's Community Work Department objectives in relation to public health. It is interesting also to note that at EU level, the Roma

As a key principle in community development, community participation of this order and material change are central to this definition built on 'active and genuine involvement by the people'; but the opposite state of affairs prevails at Hollyhill (2.1.11) as one stakeholder's remarks make clear:

'The agencies do their own thing anyway, and the Government is not getting the return on their money'.

Let there be no doubt, interagency working at best can be difficult, particularly where different responsibilities and agendas converge across different statutory and voluntary agencies in the absence of a common vision, holistic ethos, or effective communication. Genuine and effective interagency working is vital and expected, nevertheless, if gaps and dilemmas are to be eliminated.

Dilemmas

2.2.2.6 Thirdly, it is recognised that one problem for one agency can lead to difficulties for others. Social work teams, it was stressed, had a 'patch system' where workers knew Traveller families at Knocknaheeny, but the tradition of social work had changed. It was 'now delivered on a "take" system with no dedicated named person who knows the families'. While this may not be true for all agencies, of course, the system, stakeholders say, 'does not allow them to work with families'. Different agencies have different ways of delivering services to individuals or families on the Site, which can also lead to a variance between policy intent and practice. It is not intended here to suggest that every Traveller needs a dedicated social worker (cf. 2.1.4-2.1.6), but some changes, on the contrary, can impact negatively on groups that are largely socially excluded. As such, the provision of dedicated support for individuals or all families might present the 17 agencies with a professional dilemma: on the one hand, service provision is necessary to help engender improvements for Travellers; on the other, such provision could be regarded as fulfilling the stereotype that Travellers are always dependent. Moreover, distrust can develop where Travellers are minded to use exclusivity of provision for their personal benefit, regardless of the needs of other Travellers.

Communication, trust, transparency and accountability

2.2.2.7 Fourthly, transparency, accountability and communication, which are also foundational key performance indicators, are at best minimal across all agencies, which is almost inevitable in such circumstances. One stakeholder stated:

Summit which took place in Brussels on 16 September 2008, attended by more than 500 participants from the EU institutions, the Member States and civil society, marks the start of a new partnership among all key actors and stronger policy-making. The overall objective must be full participation by Roma [Travellers] in the economic, social and cultural life of mainstream society and equal opportunities for all.

‘Uncoordinated systems and methods of working have led to isolation and limited responsibility among agencies [statutory and voluntary] to share information on what works best’.

A lack of openness about how some Travellers’ needs at Knocknaheeny are addressed can increase ineffectiveness. This is evidenced not only by Travellers’ indication of non-involvement, apathy, or inability to play their roles, but they are also not empowered to help determine how different agendas shape their social condition. Moreover, a lack of transparency among some can also deny other agencies access to sufficient high quality information that would assist in overcoming protracted territorial attitudes. Such an environment at Hollyhill has helped to characterise the lack of trust and restrict progress.

2.2.2.8 There is a prevailing belief that, as one stakeholder puts it, ‘no strong representation from Knocknaheeny [exists] on the interagency group’. This viewpoint emerged from a comparison Travellers drew, referring to a time when service delivery through a key worker¹⁴ for all the families was in place; the service was regarded by them as inadequate, but welcomed. This perspective illustrated the lack of effective communication. It was further remarked by one stakeholder, for example, that ‘there should be a representative from the Women’s Network on the Council structures’, but this comment serves only to confirm a fundamental weakness in communication among statutory and voluntary sector agencies. Cork Traveller Women’s Network,¹⁵ which includes Knocknaheeny Traveller Women’s Group,¹⁶ is represented on the Traveller Interagency Steering Group. We are aware, also that the Traveller Women’s Network and the Traveller Visibility Group are represented on the interagency group.¹⁷

Settled community interventions

2.2.2.9 Fifthly, some stakeholders recognised that interventions made by ‘settled people’ on behalf of Travellers do not sufficiently incorporate Travellers in decision-making processes, and helped to maintain their disempowerment. Cork City’s adopted policy on effective community participation envisages community involvement in decision-making at different levels.¹⁸ The High Level Group also regarded community participation, including Travellers, as essential to improving coordination and service delivery.¹⁹

2.2.2.10 Moreover, there is a conviction among Travellers and the settled community - agency staff - that ‘a negative attitude exists between some public

¹⁴ This may referred to a Social Worker, Community Welfare Officer, etc., terms which have been used interchangeably in interviews during the research process.

¹⁵ The Cork Traveller Women’s Network, Annual Report 2006, p. 1, (*Annual Report 2006*).

¹⁶ *Annual Report 2006*, p. 8.

¹⁷ HLG, p. 13.

¹⁸ *Making it Work*, p. 7.

¹⁹ HLG, p. 20.

and voluntary sector agencies'. While this is supported, it must be understood in the context of who ultimately takes responsibility for coordination and service delivery. Coordination, trust and confidence-building are the responsibility of all agencies and personnel *known to be taking responsibility*. Travellers themselves are also aware of the importance of their involvement and cooperation, but fear, a lack of self-confidence, need for education and training, and the strong desire to maintain some Traveller traditions in a difficult environment remain prohibitive factors.

Traveller development

2.2.2.11 Sixthly, some voluntary sector agencies indicate that voluntary sector organisations 'show more personal interest in the families than the public sector'. The general opinion is that local authorities can do more to demonstrate 'consistent interest'. One stakeholder remarked:

'There is a huge gap because the Local Authority is not really interested in the Site. Though the increase in social work has been significant, there has been no provision for support, even when the previous worker was off'.

The nature of the problem at Hollyhill is not merely a lack of coordination, but also includes the need for strategic thinking and delivery of sustainable community development. Where any of the agencies tend to pursue individual agendas in relative isolation, the opposite outcome is achieved.

2.2.2.12 We noted, furthermore, that voluntary sector agencies 'tend to be more people-centric', that is, their work tends to illustrate more overt compassion towards Travellers. It is characterised by persistence beyond the call of duty or the demands of legislation while seeking improvements in Travellers' health, social welfare and living conditions. A willing tenacity to overcome the obstacles abound. Though Local Authority involvement through Welfare Officers was recognised among the voluntary and community agencies as crucial to coordination, some thought that a sustainable people-focus was lacking.

2.2.2.13 Coordination takes place, nevertheless, with some agencies (2.2.2.2) meeting to address particular issues as they arise:

- ❖ the HSE's Community Worker and Community Health Worker attends the Knocknaheeny Traveller Women's Group, which is a member group of the Cork Traveller Women's Network;
- ❖ Terence McSwiney has met with the Visiting Traveller Teacher, the Primary School, Traveller Visibility Group, School Completion Group, Education Welfare, and Youth Link;
- ❖ Orga Chorcai, with Springboard, We the People, and three Traveller youth groups;

- ❖ Cork City Council's oversight of the Traveller Accommodation Programme; and
- ❖ the interagency Health and Accommodation Working Group.

The effectiveness of this approach is limited, therefore, because the interagency function and structure at community level require development and leadership; this is where the need for coordination is most urgent particularly on accommodation issues. Coordination, nevertheless, remains almost non-existent in the comprehensive form in which it was envisaged by policy makers.

2.2.3 Accommodation

2.2.3.1 The 1998 Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act was designed to support legislative frameworks that would facilitate the Government's commitment to Travellers.²⁰ The current accommodation plan acknowledges significant links between accommodation and issues such as health, education, employment and discrimination, but envisages 'a holistic and integrative approach in which the Cork City Council would be fully involved' (2.2.2.4). Clearly, the types of accommodation as set out in the programme²¹ sought to meet the needs of Hollyhill/Knocknaheeny Travellers. An impasse, however, appears to persist around tensions fostered by conflicting attitudes towards standard accommodation.

Standard accommodation

2.2.3.2 The Traveller Accommodation Programme 2005-2008 clearly sets out the policy of Cork City Council, which includes retention of Hollyhill Halting Site as permanent accommodation.²² While Travellers' in November 2004 remained at this Site, their fears about being placed in standard accommodation today, as a way of resolving associated difficulties, for example, health, childcare, or education remain.²³ These concerns are also echoed by some voluntary and community sector agencies emphasizing a perceived intention by the City Council to 'force' Travellers into standard accommodation. While some Travellers are willing to move into standard accommodation, many others, and some agencies believe that a move by compulsion would ignore important aspects of Traveller culture and traditions. If recognition and discussion on the need for horse keeping were omitted, for example, this would exacerbate the current difficulties.

2.2.3.3 Some key stakeholder voluntary sector agencies strongly suggested that 'two different approaches to accommodation schemes are required'.²⁴ One approach that addresses the specific needs of Traveller families, including the

²⁰ TAP, p. 2.

²¹ TAP, p. 12-14.

²² TAP, p. 18.

²³ TAP, pp. 5-8.

²⁴ TAP, p. 18.

maintenance of traditional horse keeping, would require planned meetings with each family at the Site by dedicated personnel. It is believed that this would facilitate understanding and cooperation, and explore how Travellers might make the transition as part of an integrated structure.²⁵ The other approach would be structured around Cork City Council's Social Inclusion model which entails improved coordination, offering help with education, employment,²⁶ training, and consideration of childcare places. We noted that horse keeping is not an issue for all families. Whatever approach is used progress will require Traveller engagement and persistence by service providers, as such work implies a radical cultural shift and personal development for Hollyhill Travellers.

2.2.3.4 The lack of coordination on standard accommodation has resulted in some nervousness. On the one hand, voluntary sector agencies and Travellers are concerned about need; on the other, the public authority expresses apprehension about affordability. The local authority is clear about its inability, for example, to meet Travellers' expectations around provision for horses. Nevertheless, Travellers consider this a condition which voluntary sector agencies also believe is vital for progress. The High Level Group clearly recommends it because of its potential to strengthen Traveller culture,²⁷ underlining the need for statutory and voluntary sector agencies, with Travellers being the lead agency, to

'develop culturally appropriate enterprises and enterprise training [such as] the business of breeding, training and shoeing horses'.²⁸

2.2.3.5 There is a gap, therefore, between Government policy, on the one hand, and how services are delivered on the other, particularly where policy tends to restrict or ignore Traveller culture and traditions. Horse keeping forms an important historical Traveller tradition which Travellers insist is necessary. While some writers trace Irish Travellers back to 200 AD or even as early as 600 BC when metalworkers travelled the country with their families, all acknowledged that throughout history Traveller 'men carried on their trades as horse dealers'²⁹ which facilitated their nomadic lifestyle.

2.2.3.6 This tension between need, fear and affordability has been emphasised by one public body which suggested that 'Traveller halting sites might not be

²⁵ TAP, p. 20.

²⁶ TAP, pp. 17, 24-25.

²⁷ HLG, Action 1.1.1, p. 65; TAP, p. 17.

²⁸ HLG, p. 65.

²⁹ Sara Constantakis, *History and Way of Life of Gypsies; Gypsies in Nineteenth-Century England and in Jane Eyre: A Love/Hate Relationship*, University of Michigan-Dearborn, 1997. <http://www.umd.umich.edu/casl/hum/eng/classes/434/charweb> see also Gmelch, G. and S.B. 'Ireland's Travelling People: A Comprehensive Bibliography' in *Journal of the Gypsy Lore Society* (3rd series) vol. 3, 1978, pp. 159-169; *Report of the Task Force on the Travelling Community*, July 1995. The government published this report in which its key statement was that Travellers had a distinct culture and identity that had to be respected and taken into account in all matters relating to them.

the best way of accommodating the culture', but Travellers do not hold this view. Travellers do not want any one type of accommodation (2.2.3.3), and the key question for them is choice.³⁰ Travellers will need choice that is culturally appropriate, and provision which could contribute, for example, to children's education - learning about animal welfare or involvement in local industry through horse projects etc.

2.2.4 Public sector mindset

2.2.4.1 We address three issues relating to mindset towards Travellers. Firstly, in his paper 'The Final Solution',³¹ Robbie McVeigh points out that following the publication of the Government's report of the Task Force on the Travelling Community in 1995, 'it seemed there would be a trajectory of gentle if limited reformism and reform in state policy towards Travellers in Ireland.'³² This was predicated on the general public's attitude of 'fear and contempt' which McVeigh argued underpinned an 'anti-Traveller' discourse.³³ Throughout our examination Travellers and members of all agencies active at Hollyhill expressed concern that the public discourse continues to treat Travellers unequally. Concerns, furthermore, about a public sector mindset perceived to be less people-centred underscores an important dichotomy.

Travellers as equals

2.2.4.2 Secondly, the observation that the voluntary sector is more people-centric than the public sector is widely held by a cross section of voluntary and community sector agencies and Travellers. Whether perception or reality, judgments tend to be made on this belief. One stakeholder agency said:

'the mindset of the local authorities in regard to Travellers needs to change, treating them as equal tenants'.

While voluntary sector agencies and Travellers point to this distinction time and again, it is clear that the Local Authority seeks to work with Knocknaheeny Travellers in the context of the Traveller Accommodation Programme through an effective interagency structure. In this case, it is assumed that achievement of equality of treatment demands significant changes. These are thought to include:

- ❖ increased staff to address needs;
- ❖ openness to Travellers' suggestions;
- ❖ doing more to build trust and confidence in relationships;
- ❖ avoidance of assimilation or forced relocation into standard accommodation because it would further damage relationships.

³⁰ Footnote 28, p. 21.

³¹ McVeigh, p. 1.

³² McVeigh, p. 1.

³³ McVeigh, p. 2.

2.2.4.3 Both Travellers and all agencies believe that trust can be built, but the method will determine how or whether it happens. We noted, for example, that when the HSE commenced Springboard, *'a programmatic response was initiated, and Travellers began to trust them discussing their issues with Springboard'*. This would also be true for other agencies addressing needs in a culturally specific and sensitive manner that seek to involve Travellers.

Traveller involvement

2.2.4.4 Thirdly, at Knocknaheeny, negative or fearful Traveller attitudes towards public sector agencies are also challenging. Some Traveller men, for example, are articulate and willing to engage with local interagency structures and public bodies. In order to bring this to fruition and add real value to decision-making processes, Travellers would require training, appropriate support, and encouragement, particularly where, in addition, spokespersons or 'leaders of the "main" families' on the Site to be agreed, and were made to feel welcome at different levels.³⁴

Staff and volunteers

2.2.4.5 Fourthly, it is generally accepted that coordinated service provision is essentially a matter of consistent Traveller support and adequate staff deployment. Stakeholders point out that the lack of consistent support for families is evidenced by inadequate volunteer deployment and the 'high turnover of staff and volunteers' working at the Site. These factors may have more to do, however, with staff and volunteer management and/or training. Traveller needs and culture at Knocknaheeny, nevertheless, demand well trained personnel with an appropriate grasp of the issues, who demonstrate respect for Travellers' plight, whilst working in harmony here as in other sections of society.

2.2.4.6 Appropriate levels of public sector staff with community development experience and clearly defined roles are not only essential to Traveller community development, but necessary to produce value for money (2.1.6; 2.1.10) at Hollyhill. Much more intensive work needs to be done in order to address agency concerns; but one of the primary requirements for staff is a working knowledge of Traveller culture and sensitivities. Where agencies are working with Hollyhill Travellers, equality, anti-racism and community development training for all front line staff would be imperative. This could help to identify synergies of the agendas of Travellers' and voluntary and statutory agencies.

³⁴ *Making it Work*, p. 7.

2.2.5 Agencies and agendas

2.2.5.1 It is clearly concerning to many stakeholders that competition among some voluntary agencies 'is rife' and poses a threat to effective service delivery. One stakeholder remarked:

'Competition exists among the agencies which may be related to funding regimes or egos'.

A level of competition might be expected among 17 bodies focused on a small community group in a particular area of social policy. While the 17 bodies addressing the needs of only 12 families highlight the need for streamlining and better coordination, competition as such could be productive and advantageous. Positive outcomes in this regard are possible, however, only where there is a common vision, clear strategies, and a commitment by all agencies to monitor and evaluate practice. In relation to service delivery to disadvantaged groups, Professor Christopher McCrudden notes:

'It requires all stakeholders across the community working together to ensure that change actually occurs, particularly in those areas of disadvantage where equality has been far too slow in coming in the past.'³⁵

On the contrary, a range of issues affecting coordination at Hollyhill emanate from disharmony and the attitude of possessiveness – 'these are our Travellers' - by some agencies.

2.2.5.2 Firstly, some public sector agencies provide seed funding for work being done by voluntary sector agencies, such as the HSE (Table 1, page 12), and then other bodies including interagency structures supply additional resources. The City Council, for example, makes significant resources available (2.1.6), but precisely how this is apportioned for service delivery to Hollyhill Travellers, and with what outcomes, remain unclear.

A regular forum

2.2.5.3 Secondly, a single forum or regular point of engagement through which all agencies, Travellers and their representatives could meet to consider the issues affecting this Site is not apparent. At the community level, coordination of the work in which all 17 agencies or a representative proportion are involved would be a key development for the future if the situation is to improve.

2.2.5.4 Thirdly, different statutory and voluntary sector agencies have very different and uncoordinated agendas, a situation which is exacerbated by the

³⁵ Christopher McCrudden, *Mainstreaming Equality in the Governance of Northern Ireland*, Fordham International Law Journal, Vol. 22:1696, 1998-1999 (FILJ), p. 1773.

lack of open and transparent collaboration. The key question, nevertheless, is how to maintain consistent and mutual support across different agencies when roles and agendas do not correspond in a common vision for Hollyhill. This concern illustrates current tensions which require more intensive discussion among all stakeholders.

Self-protection

2.2.5.5 Fourthly, in discussion with some statutory and voluntary agencies, a defensive manner is perceptible; but this is almost inevitable given the specific concern this report addresses – the need for effective coordination, interagency working, and improved support for Travellers. Divergent agendas among the different stakeholders with different forms of access to Hollyhill Travellers also complicate the question of coordination, and tend to reinforce barriers.

Relationships

2.2.5.6 Fifthly, such barriers or lack of open communication can also increase the difficulties among voluntary and community sector agencies. Research being conducted on the needs of Hollyhill Travellers by one agency, and research commissioned by the City Council, for example, appears to have commenced without each being aware initially of the other. While this situation is not entirely unfamiliar, it created the potential for a degree of distrust (2.2.2.3). This is indicative of the need for strategy, however, though some agencies try overtly to work with other agencies and families in order to avoid duplication, overlap, and confusion; indeed, strong communication could help to prevent insensitivity engendered by multiple agencies accessing the Site simultaneously to address the same issues.

2.2.5.7 Many voluntary and community sector agencies bear witness to ‘a *breakdown in relationships*’ between different agencies. Almost all statutory and voluntary agency representatives articulated variations of the statement made by one stakeholder:

‘I have never met, or plan work with any other agency at Hollyhill’.

2.2.5.8 Finally, while funding itself cannot be considered a barrier, access to limited amounts by various voluntary and community sector agencies can create tensions and become an obstacle to all concerned. The key ethical issue is whether funding is targeted strictly in the interest of Travellers or to the benefit primarily of the agencies, statutory and voluntary. It is arguable that both are necessary, but the problem has arisen where agency priorities, statutory or voluntary, appear paramount, as illustrated above (2.2.2.3; 2.2.5.4). One stakeholder remarked: ‘*interagency funding and tension exist*’; we note that this can be attributed to the fact that sector or programme jealousies are inextricably linked to a tough funding environment in the Hollyhill context.

Mutual agency support

2.2.5.9 In these circumstances, all 17 agencies or different groupings of these are not in a position generally to support each other. This inability has been amplified by the physical conditions on the Site where very basic needs such as maintenance and sanitation are not consistently addressed either by Travellers or the statutory agencies, according to Travellers and voluntary sector groups. Working on the Site is, therefore, daunting and uninviting. Overcoming and going forward positively will also require strong directional, sensitive and informed leadership.

2.2.6 Leadership

2.2.6.1 The presence of uncoordinated *ad hoc* actions and inconsistent and fragile relationships also point to the lack of effective leadership. It is missing here largely because of the issues identified in this report, and, as one stakeholder poignantly remarked:

‘There needs to be strategic interagency leadership which is strong and visionary for Knocknaheeny. This is also necessary for ensuring capacity is built among Travellers. It is because there is no organisation around the Site that Travellers, without a common voice, actually miss out’.

Strong leadership in this context means commitment to ensuring work is relevant, equality-proofed, transparent and fair, and that respect is extended to all players. Leadership here also entails an ability to establish and maintain professional approaches to collaboration, and the transparent pursuit of practical and sustainable outcomes for Travellers. The ability to enable relationships to be forged and developed will require sensitivity but also strategic leadership.

2.2.7 Summary

The main barriers to coordination among the agencies include:

- ❖ lack of, and need for, effective leadership and organisation;
- ❖ lack of trust, confidence, accountability, and effective communication;
- ❖ 17 different agencies, serving 12 families with different and uncoordinated agendas;
- ❖ absence of single regular meeting point/forum for all 17 agencies to build relationships, discuss, assess, agree, implement, and evaluate best practice;
- ❖ inconsistent and ineffectual relationships and interagency working at all levels;
- ❖ *ad hoc* and partial issue-based coordination by some groups;
- ❖ absence of a common vision and strategic direction;
- ❖ sector jealousies – ‘these are our Travellers’;
- ❖ discrimination and negative attitudes towards Travellers;
- ❖ absence of holistic Traveller community development ethos;
- ❖ inconsistent application of community development and participation principles and practice;
- ❖ corporate dilemmas – objective versus subjective modes of working;
- ❖ institutional resistance to provision of space for horse projects or horse keeping;
- ❖ Traveller fear of being ‘forced’ into settled accommodation without ability to maintain traditions and culture. e.g. horses;
- ❖ need for adequate dedicated frontline staff with bespoke training; high volunteer turnover;
- ❖ patchy and inconsistent coordination by some agencies on particular issues;
- ❖ absence of coordination of services across all agencies;
- ❖ lack of collective voice among Hollyhill Travellers.

2.3 Barriers to Coordination - Travellers

2.3.1 Distrust

2.3.1.1 In this section we examine barriers relating to Traveller attitudes and practices. All agencies agree that, with on-going tension on the Site, ultimately, 'Travellers have to take responsibility, communicate with the community, and reach conclusions among themselves'. This is predicated on the view that without Travellers' active involvement, distrust will prevail and reinforce prejudice.

2.3.1.2 The lack of trust has consequences for many Travellers at Hollyhill. If children need protection, one stakeholder declares,

'it becomes rather difficult for the authorities to get close to families because Travellers do not always trust authorities'.

'Restricted' access at the halting site is a critical factor in determining whether and how services are delivered, particularly where the authorities are distrusted. One stakeholder pointed to a potential consequence:

'services to children can cease and may not be picked up until much later in their lives'.

Another remarked: 'Travellers tend to see themselves as all in the same boat', which can affect efforts to build trust and reduce potential or actual inter-Traveller conflict.

2.3.2 Inter-Traveller relations

2.3.2.1 Among the 12 families at Hollyhill, some are engaged in inter-family disputes for various reasons. This creates obstacles for service providers and heightens tension as well for other stakeholders. Conflict is not unique to Travellers, however; it is also a feature of settled life. The roles different statutory and voluntary sector agencies play are often dissimilar, but some tend to treat Traveller conflict as a cultural phenomenon; Travellers have most to gain, however, by minimizing opportunities for conflict.

2.3.2.2 A consequence of conflict or fractured relationships among Travellers on the Site is doubt as to whether there could be Traveller representatives working with statutory agencies, for example, on behalf of all Hollyhill Traveller families. The idea is considered potentially difficult but possible, particularly where Travellers could be assisted with conflict resolution, trust building initiatives, discussion and agreement amongst the families. More holistic and productive relationships could deter or reduce violence and discrimination.

Domestic Violence

2.3.2.3 Domestic violence is also an issue at Knocknaheeny, and it is, where possible, addressed by survivors being placed in safe accommodation. Temporary or long term remedies depend largely on agency accessibility, statutory and voluntary, which would be based on the ability of them and Travellers to trust one another, and of course on the availability of appropriate and accessible services. The role of the HSE or Cork City Council's Housing Directorate, notwithstanding, it is probable that domestic violence could effectively be addressed as part of a package of solutions using methods not unlike those applied in the settled community.

2.3.3 Discrimination and stereotyping

2.3.3.1 On the matter of discrimination four points are worthy of note. Firstly, Travellers generally are concerned with the same issues as the settled community, but very often face racism and discrimination and believe themselves to be the most marginalised in Knocknaheeny. The Equal Status Act 2002 prohibits discrimination, including against Travellers, on nine grounds.³⁶ Travellers, nevertheless, often make accusations of discrimination in relation to service provision. Where they are treated as a separate social category by service providers, however, they regard being 'singled out' as discriminatory. Discrimination against Travellers is widely recognised as historically factual (2.2.4.1) for Travellers, and Hollyhill is no exception.

2.3.3.2 Secondly, Travellers have clearly absorbed the effects of discrimination based on negative stereotyping. Generally, they do not believe they will get jobs or succeed in education, and often communicate a lack of ambition to their children. This has had the effect of diminishing, discouraging or removing self-esteem, that is, the ability consequently to actively engage public authorities (2.3.4.2), or aspire to advancement out of poverty or illiteracy (2.3.4.5).

2.3.3.3 Thirdly, Travellers' children at Hollyhill attend integrated education, but do not mix after school, and any fledgling support is provided in Knocknaheeny mainly by a small local community group. We noted claims that after school programmes have not succeeded because of Traveller 'disinterest'; this is confirmed by Travellers themselves, who believe that separate provision would help to maintain Traveller culture. Ironically, education is the key to overcoming this fear.

2.3.3.4 Fourthly, attitudes towards Travellers here are also conditioned by a popular stereotype: that Travellers' behaviour in the area of public health, sanitation and animal maintenance can be dangerous and creates a bleak physical environment. Regardless of this reality, the related areas of concern are inextricably linked to barriers around education and service reception.

³⁶ Cf. The Equal Status Acts 2002 to 2004.

2.3.4 Education and training

2.3.4.1 Regarded as one of the most pressing needs at Hollyhill, education and training represent a major challenge for service providers and Travellers alike. Firstly, different voluntary agencies corroborate a significant lack of training and Traveller involvement, which is an obstacle because **‘the Traveller voice and presence are lacking in decision-making forums’** (2.2.4.4). Revitalising Areas by Planning, Investment and Development (RAPID), a government programme set up to address such issues, is regarded as suitably placed through its Area Implementation Team to make a significant contribution at Knocknaheeny. Through literacy and office based programmes, some Travellers can effectively learn to work within an interagency setting. Moreover, as Traveller fathers’ resistance to promoting education is also problematic, the negative impacts on self-esteem in this community require sustained tutoring.

Poor self esteem

2.3.4.2 Secondly, generally recognised to be a hurdle particularly for women, poor self-esteem among Travellers is an issue with which any service provider must reckon. Stakeholders believe it could be addressed in similar ways to those applied in the settled community. As a result Travellers tend to find engagement with official structures daunting. One Traveller interviewee stated: ‘Travellers are afraid of men in suits!’ Time and on-going support utilising practical ideas could help to overcome these fears, though it will require persistence by all agencies.

Literacy

2.3.4.3 Thirdly, literacy is a huge problem for Travellers, but as one stakeholder reminded us, it is one that ‘also applies to some of the settled population’. Nevertheless, there is a lack of commitment by Traveller fathers to promote and value education, again believing that this militates against the preservation of Traveller culture and traditions. One respondent strongly remarks:

‘Parents/families need to take more responsibility in engaging with education and ensuring their children engage’.

In terms of employment Traveller fathers at Knocknaheeny are beginning to participate in training activities such as carpentry and metal work, etc., but education, which fosters empowerment and an improved economic status, remains problematic.

2.3.5 Income, wealth and poverty

2.3.5.1 Travellers' inability to trust relate to many factors as described above (2.3.1). They find income support as a means tested benefit, for example, a challenge, among other things, which tends to reinforce poverty and therefore a lack of engagement on their part. There are also concerns about Traveller community enterprise or entrepreneurial interests that can lead to obstacles, as one stakeholder remarked:

‘images of wealth among Travellers can also be problematic for the authorities in deciding any service provision’.

It is noteworthy, however, that Travellers at Knocknaheeny do not overtly exhibit such images of wealth (2.2.3.4) or prosperity, but poverty and unemployment are deep concerns for all agencies and Travellers alike.

2.3.6 Childcare

2.3.6.1 By December 2008, some 30 Traveller children under the age of three resided at Knocknaheeny, but as one stakeholder observed, ‘not one attends play school’ (2.3.3.3). Some families have been allocated childcare places, but these have not been taken up. It is further believed by some statutory and voluntary sector agencies that this is consequential upon a lack of understanding of the value of education, and is a ‘symptom of separateness’. Travellers have tended to confirm the latter themselves (2.2.2.10; 2.3.4.3).

2.3.6.2 Our research bears evidence of tensions between some statutory and voluntary agencies on this issue. It is believed, for example, that statutory agencies tend to be distant from the issues. One stakeholder declared:

‘If we are to be serious about engaging with the mothers flexible childcare has to be seen as a priority. We need to have a lead agency making things happen’.

2.3.7 Accommodation

2.3.7.1 The Cork City Council’s Traveller Accommodation Programme 2005-2008 was adopted by Council in February 2005, and the Unit responsible for its implementation is supported by the Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee.³⁷ The programme provides the basis for allocation and management in order to improve conditions at Hollyhill, given that the core accommodation objective includes maintenance of existing halting sites. The TAP states:

³⁷ Members of the Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee include housing officials, public representatives and representatives of Travellers.

'Halting Sites will also be refurbished as required during the period 2005-2008 to ensure improved standards of accommodation for residents.'³⁸

Travellers and all statutory, community and voluntary sector agencies continue to complain about the conditions prevailing at Hollyhill. It is noteworthy that some Travellers tend to hold fixed ideas about accommodation choice: some wish to live with particular families and not with others, while some express a need to be separate from all others. Moreover, some Travellers stoutly defend what they regard as their right to horse keeping/projects as a condition of being allocated standard accommodation (2.2.3). Issues and tensions around accommodation are symptomatic of broader range of concerns all linked to poor or non-existent collaboration or the absence of actual sustainable outcomes.

2.3.7.2 All of the issues identified in this report cannot effectively be treated disjointedly, but demand an integrated and collaborative approaches. The lack of a common voice among Travellers, and the absence of strategic direction on a common vision among the agencies render the current situation untenable, and underscore the importance of realistic solutions, which the next section of this report explore.

2.3.8 Summary

The main barriers to coordination among Travellers include:

- ❖ distrust between Travellers and the agencies;
- ❖ inter-Traveller conflict and tension on Site;
- ❖ absorption of public discriminatory attitudes;
- ❖ absence of a common voice across the agencies;
- ❖ non-involvement in community development and illiteracy;
- ❖ inability and unwillingness to value education;
- ❖ poor self esteem and lack of self confidence;
- ❖ tensions around income support and the impact of poverty;
- ❖ non-take up of childcare places, and resistance to mixing with settled children in childcare or after school places;
- ❖ fear about, and fixed views on, accommodation needs and requirements;
- ❖ poor sanitation and unhealthy living conditions.

³⁸ TAP, p. 14.

2.4 Options Appraisal

2.4.1 In this section we assess a number of approaches based on the evidence of resource input into Hollyhill/Knocknaheeny and the barriers to coordination as evidenced above (2.1.6; 2.2; 2.3).

2.4.2 Addressing the need for coordination by proposing a model for sustainable best practice, strategies designed to build relationships and strengthen cooperation among all agencies and Travellers are urgent. The proposals set out in this section together with the above analysis inform our conclusions and recommendations.

2.4.3 Proposal 1: convene a half or full day consultation which brings together as a first step all public, voluntary and community sector agencies, Travellers and Traveller representatives.

Rationale

2.4.3.1 It is envisaged that a major consultation involving all stakeholders would begin a process of relationship building, creating or strengthening the context for trust and confidence building among all statutory and voluntary sector agencies and Travellers. As this report shows, an on-going strategic focus is necessary in order to ensure that the substantial level of resources being put in could lead to effective outcomes for the residents of the Hollyhill Halting Site.

2.4.3.2 As an initial step in the process of community development based on established criteria (*Making it Happen*), the consultation would also enable statutory and voluntary agencies to listen to, hear one another, and create an environment in which Travellers at Knocknaheeny would be encouraged and enabled to participate with other key stakeholders.

2.4.3.3 As a structured element of a wider process, the consultation would be built on the basis of a common agenda, utilising the results of the CCITG research initiatives. It would represent a preliminary stage of the model, and is likely to include broadly a number of steps:

Step 1 ***Host a major consultation with all key stakeholders including Travellers and their representatives, preferably planned and facilitated by independent external consultants (Appendix C for indicative agenda).***

This consultation would provide core ideas for the development of a fully supported strategic action plan to be implemented by all stakeholders. It would be important to use a trusted chairperson and facilitators who could ensure objectivity and command the respect of all stakeholders.

Step 2 *Agree a process where all stakeholders could commit to an ongoing platform for future collaboration.*

The consultation - and the model - would require prior careful planning and development, so that ownership by all agencies could gradually and sustainably be secured at all stages. It is not envisaged that new money would be required; on the evidence available, funding the process could be achieved by redeploying some existing resources (2.1.6).

Step 3 *Develop a strategy for achieving stated and agreed objectives including a regular forum of all agencies.*

It is necessary to gain consensus on how to take forward the core elements of a model which the consultation would have considered. In this regard, agreement on a strategy would be vital to achieve, at least in principle, during a plenary.

Facilitation

2.4.3.4 It would be important to ensure that this event demonstrate the values of trust, objectivity, transparency and accountability. Planning and leadership by independent chairperson/s and facilitators, therefore, would commence and mold a process of effective engagement. It would be vital to establish and encourage among the audience trust and integrity in the process, and engender a sense of expectation in terms of positive outcomes, fully owned by all stakeholders.

2.4.3.5 An indicative programme and list of issues (Appendix C) which might be addressed includes:

- ❖ presentation of research report/s as basis for the consultation
- ❖ community development best practice
- ❖ working with common community development agendas
- ❖ funding realities, sources and impacts
- ❖ principles and practice of participation and representation
- ❖ trust and confidence building initiatives
- ❖ alternative approaches to coordination

Target audience

2.4.3.6 To derive the optimum benefit from such an exercise, it would be important to target all stakeholder agencies with any connection to Travellers at Knocknaheeny. An indicative list of categories would also include:

- ❖ Health Service executive decision making managers and frontline staff
- ❖ City Council decision making managers and frontline staff
- ❖ Education decision making managers and frontline staff
- ❖ Travellers
- ❖ Voluntary and community sector decision making managers and frontline staff
- ❖ Employment decision making managers and frontline staff
- ❖ The Traveller Interagency Group
- ❖ RAPID
- ❖ Traveller networks
- ❖ External guests

2.4.4 Proposal 2: the HSE and Cork City Council could back the development of a sustainable model by meeting to reconsider strategic development based on the legislative requirements for interagency working, and seek ways of driving forward common interests that could lead to tangible and visible outcomes.

2.4.5 Proposal 3: convene a regular community and voluntary sector group including Traveller representatives and Travellers to debate issues and approaches, and to develop, maintain and strengthen the integrated model.

2.4.6 Proposal 4: explore a method of selection of Travellers for training, preparation and placement, particularly Travellers who can then represent the families in decision making roles. This could be accompanied by the appointment of staff that are aware of Traveller culture, and/or train those currently working with Travellers.

2.4.7 Proposal 5: statutory bodies redeploy resources to bolster training for women and men who are literate or semi-literate in order that Travellers themselves can engage in the interagency processes, and learn how to maintain their own environments etc. This does not necessarily displace those working or speaking on their behalf.

2.4.8 Proposal 6: consider the appointment of a lead agency as a core element of the model, and enable statutory and voluntary sector agencies to agree a process for enabling the lead agency to deliver services on behalf of all. This would include developing an operational plan, identifying actions required by each agency, establishing a set of objectives and a list of actions for which the lead agency would be identified, e.g. RAPID.

PART THREE: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1 Conclusions

3.1.1 While some work is being done, there is a fundamental lack of coordination of service delivery to the 12 Traveller families at Hollyhill/Knocknaheeny; there are 17 agencies with some attachment to the Site. This ratio and the lack of, or piecemeal and inconsistent, cooperation among all agencies sustain ineffectiveness, and create profound reservations about value for money.

3.1.2 The absence of trust and mutual support between different agencies, Travellers, and some public sector bodies and Travellers are key contributory factors to the lack of coordination. Central to this is the absence of a common vision to which all agencies are committed, or strategies to enable them to deliver visible outcomes.

3.1.3 The majority of agencies attached to Hollyhill pursue their work with integrity and goodwill, but some tend to maintain a patronising outlook towards the Traveller families.

3.1.4 The accommodation, health, social care, education and employment needs of Travellers have been provided for under legislation, and effected through the interagency structure, but coordination has not been developed.

3.1.5 Traveller participation in the decision making processes at any level occurs primarily through representation by members of settled communities. Travellers can contribute to coordination by direct participation in the interagency structure, which could be achieved by Travellers being trained, supported and enabled to participate.

3.1.6 Processes which forge cooperation and transparency among all agencies need to be built up as part of a process of identifying and developing a sustainable model.

3.1.7 There is a fear among voluntary sector agencies and Travellers alike that statutory accommodation policy tends to disregard Travellers' cultural traditions such as horse keeping; discussion about choice, affordability and need is a key factor when the CCITG is addressing standard accommodation for Travellers.

3.1.8 Overcoming the numerous barriers to coordination among all agencies and Travellers requires

- ❖ a common vision;
- ❖ agreed strategies;

- ❖ redeployment of resources;
- ❖ trust and confidence building;
- ❖ ant-racist and community development training;
- ❖ sustainable participation of Travellers;
- ❖ regular forum for all;
- ❖ effective communication;
- ❖ committed, informed, strong and sensitive leadership.

3.1.9 In addition to the proposals set out above (2.4), a sustainable model of coordination requires steps including:

- ❖ provision of on-going support for Travellers participating in the interagency structures and community development practice;
- ❖ establishment of a feedback system by which the lead agency communicates to the forum; and
- ❖ monitoring and evaluation tools regularly applied to systems and the model.

3.1.10 The HSE, and Cork City Council in particular, have central roles to play in coordinating service delivery; these statutory bodies need to explore together how effectively they could transparently carry forward these roles and contribute to building an effective model of coordination.

3.1.11 Some Traveller families tend to be self-appointed 'lead voices' on, but not necessarily for, the entire Site. These voices could be harnessed and engaged in discussion about development and meaningful participation.

3.1.12 There is no regular forum in which all stakeholder agencies and Travellers meet together to think, plan, implement and evaluate needs, whilst building relationships of trust; this is urgent if effective coordination and support to Travellers would be achieved.

3.1.13 One of the core aspects absent from the interagency structure at community level at Hollyhill is informed and dedicated leadership. This will be a main requirement in any future action plan in order to guide development and maintain coordination which leads to visible and appropriate outcomes for Travellers.

3.1.14 There is a distinct lack of race awareness, cultural, equality and community development training; its provision is necessary in order to sensitize and prepare staff to understand the challenges Travellers at Hollyhill/Knocknaheeny face and the opportunities for addressing them.

3.2 Recommendations

Cork City Interagency Traveller Group

3.2.1 Cork City Interagency Traveller Group should plan and deliver a major one day consultation involving all Knocknaheeny Traveller stakeholders, with an agenda built on the main issues raised in this report (2.4.3).

3.2.2 Cork City Interagency Traveller Group should revisit the interagency structure at the high level to identify gaps and inefficiencies and remedy these; the Group should encourage greater participation and effectiveness among all statutory and voluntary sector agencies attached to the Hollyhill Halting Site (1.2.1; 2.2.2.1).

3.2.3 Cork City Interagency Traveller Group should work with other voluntary and community sector agencies to provide race training for staff and personnel working on Traveller specific issues, including racism awareness, community development principles, and Traveller culture and traditions (2.2.4.3-2.2.3.4; 4.3.3).

3.2.4 Cork City Interagency Traveller Group working with the appropriate voluntary and community sector agencies should work to identify and train Travellers to participate in the interagency structure and functions at different levels (2.2.4.3; 2.2.4.6).

3.2.5 Cork City Interagency Traveller Group should work with other voluntary and community agencies to provide education in various formats on Traveller culture and traditions targeted specifically at settled communities (2.3.3.1).

3.2.6 Cork City Interagency Traveller Group should consider a business case and redeploy resources to encourage and perform better coordination of service delivery, and bolster training for Traveller women and men who are literate or semi-literate (2.4.7).

3.2.7 Cork City Interagency Traveller Group should consider appointing independent consultants and facilitators to plan, prepare and deliver the consultation (2.4.3.3) on its behalf.

The HSE and Cork City Council

3.2.8 The HSE and Cork City Council should meet to explore together how effectively they could contribute transparently and add value to improving coordination and support to Travellers, by building upon and sustaining their roles in the interagency structure more effectively (3.1.10).

The Community and Voluntary Sector Agencies

3.2.9 Community and voluntary sector agencies should work together to establish greater levels of trust and mutual support in fora and in service delivery, and consistently consider Travellers with respect as equals (2.2.4.1-2.2.4.2).

3.2.10 Community and voluntary sector agencies should consider the merits of a lead agency as a core element of a sustainable coordination model (2.4.8; 2.3.6.2).

3.2.11 Community and voluntary sector agencies, Traveller representatives and Travellers should meet in a regular forum to debate the issues and approaches, and to develop and strengthen the integrated model (2.4.5).

Public, Community and Voluntary Sector Agencies

3.2.12 All agencies should work together to build an ethos around strong community developmental principles which aim to promote and drive forward the well being of Knocknaheeny Travellers (1.2.1).

3.2.13 All agencies should provide adequate anti-racism and community development training for all front line staff (2.2.4.6).

3.2.14 All stakeholders should establish a regular forum, drawing on existing structures or creating a new dedicated group to forge coordination and delivery on Traveller specific agendas.

3.2.15 All community and voluntary sector agencies should meet in a regular forum to debate an operational plan identifying actions required by each agency, set objectives, and list actions for which a lead agency should be identified (2.4.8).

Travellers

3.2.16 Travellers at Hollyhill/Knocknaheeny should undertake training and education that would enable them to participate in decision-making necessary to improve their health, social care, accommodation and physical environment, and employment prospects.

3.2.17 Travellers at Hollyhill/Knocknaheeny should work with all agencies and the coordination model to find the best ways of developing trust, and select individual Travellers to represent the 12 families on the interagency structures.

Appendix A
General Questionnaire

Cork City Interagency Traveller Group
Research and Facilitation on Coordination Services
Services to Travellers at Hollyhill Halting Site

Name of Organisation/Group: Name of Respondent:
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Please continue on separate sheet if necessary Please tick the relevant box/es

Your completion of this survey will help us include your views and ideas in a review and research now being carried out about service provision on the Hollyhill/Knocknaheeny Traveller Site. Please answer all the questions as fully as possible. Your answers are very important, are anonymous, and will be treated totally confidentially.
--

1. What services /supports does your organisation provide to Travellers at the Hollyhill Halting Site? Preschool Education Health Recreation
Accommodation Advice & Information After-school care Equipment Utilities
 Adult Education Community work Travellers rights Other Please state
.....

2. How have you identified the need for your service/s to families at Hollyhill?

Formal needs assessment Response to Traveller requests

Outreach visits Statutory requirement Community Care
Other

3. What needs are you aware of at Hollyhill that are not currently being met?
.....

4. What difficulties or obstacles do you experience in delivering the service/s to the Site?
.....

5. What feedback about your service provision do you get from families on the Site?
.....
.....

5a How do you collect feedback? Use of forms/questionnaire Opinion surveys Regular staff visits Other agency data
Other

6. What other stakeholders or service provider/s do you work with on the Site?
.....
.....

7. How do you coordinate service provision where multiple service providers work with families on Site?
.....

8. What gaps in service provision might there be on the halting Site?
.....
.....

8a How do you or would you go about ensuring that any gaps are filled?
.....

9. What is the level of budget your organisation puts into work on the Site per annum?

€0 to €500 €500 to €1,000 €1,000 to €5,000 €0-€5,000
€5,000 to €10,000 €10,000 to €20,000 €20,000 to €30,000
€30,000 to €50,000 €50,000 to €100,000

No of hours by worker, e.g. health checks

Other

10. What issues or concerns with Hollyhill Traveller families require attention?
.....

If you require clarification or any assistance, please contact me on 00 44 7977 071937 Email: arlington@awtrotman.co.uk

Appendix B

Agencies Attached to Knocknaheeny Travellers

Barnardos
City of Cork VEC
Cork Traveller Women's Network
Cork City Council
Dept of Education & Science
Education Welfare Board
Family Centre
Health Service Executive
Ogra Chorcaí
Springboard
St Finbarr's Senior Traveller Training Centre
St Mary's on the Hill national school
St Vincent de Paul
Terence McSwiney College
Traveller Visibility Group
We the People CDP
Write Together

Appendix C

Indicative Consultation Agenda

- ❖ First main address by external speaker with expertise on Traveller issues
- ❖ A Response by local or national practitioner/professional
- ❖ Panel discussion with group of four to five persons – Council, HSE, Voluntary sector, Traveller, 2 external contributor
- ❖ Breakout groups: the make up of which would be pre-arranged before the consultation to get the right balances; led by external facilitators and rapporteurs
- ❖ Issues addressed here e.g. Traveller needs, culture and traditions
- ❖ Video presentation
- ❖ Convening an agreed regular meeting in which all stakeholders together develop the agenda and discuss the issues and agree action plans, and who is best placed to deliver the service;
- ❖ Second main address: Sustainable community development with special regard to Travellers
- ❖ Three plenary sessions in which facilitators with three groups consider: key issues for agencies; principles and practice of participation and representation; building sustainable communities
- ❖ Plenary: Agreeing together an agenda for ongoing work.

