

**NATIONAL TRAVELLER MONITORING &
ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

**REPORT TO MINISTER FOR JUSTICE,
EQUALITY AND LAW REFORM**

(December 2009)

Section 1

Introduction by Chairperson

The National Traveller Monitoring & Advisory Committee was established and launched by the Taoiseach in March 2007, following a commitment in *Towards 2016* from all social partners to give concentrated attention to developing a more integrated approach towards the provision of services for the Traveller community, and to improve communication between Travellers and the settled community.

The Traveller community has historically been one of the most marginalised groups within Irish society. It is important to note that progress has been made in terms of making a real contribution towards addressing some of the difficulties Travellers face. For example, recent years have seen an improvement in educational attainment amongst Travellers, in accommodation provision, and in the health status of Travellers. This however needs to be assessed against a backdrop of a low baseline, high levels of unemployment, and continuing disadvantage within the Traveller community. Discrimination is often a daily part in the lives of Travellers. Conflict within the Traveller community represents a danger to Travellers, and undermines the prospects of establishing a more productive relationship between Travellers and members of the settled community.

Attitudes to the Traveller community differ widely in our community, and range from an understanding of the difficulties Travellers face and a willingness to address these on the one hand, to raw prejudice, hostility and even hatred on the other. As a country that has made enormous strides to create a modern enlightened state where people can live in peace, and where resources to tackle the issue should not be a problem, the issues of conflict within the Traveller community remains a blot on our efforts and a clear case where we all need to try harder.

While there has been in my view no lack of commitment in terms of resources at central government level, the approach to dealing with Traveller issues on the ground is patchy. Because of special efforts by a number of local authorities, committed

individuals, and leadership amongst Travellers and Traveller organizations at local level, some areas of the country have done well, but progress is far from uniform. It is not always a question of resources – there are already considerable resources being devoted to the problems involved. Addressing the difficulties faced by Travellers is a complicated policy issue that cuts across a large number of Departments and agencies. One central point must take responsibility in terms of coordination between government Departments to ensure more effective implementation and delivery of policy objectives at local level and that good practice is achieved throughout the country, and not just in certain areas.

The problems involved will not be solved in the short or medium term, but we should be in a position to say that Travellers should have attained a quality of life comparable to the settled community within a decade – to be realistic it will take that amount of time or even longer.

This report is presented in accordance with the Terms of Reference of the Committee, which specifies that the Committee should report to the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform every two years identifying areas of concern. The report outlines the role of the Committee, its membership, activities since 2007, the work of different sub-groups, and the recommendations the Committee is presenting for consideration by Government across a number of areas.

I would like to thank the members of the Committee for the time they have given to support its work, and the constructive way in which members have engaged on several issues of relevance to the Traveller community. I look forward to this constructive approach continuing as part of the Committee's future work.

Kevin Bonner

Chairperson

National Traveller Monitoring and Advisory Committee

Section 2

The National Traveller Monitoring and Advisory Committee

Establishment

The establishment of the National Traveller Monitoring & Advisory Committee (NTMAC) followed a commitment in *Towards 2016* from all social partners to give concentrated attention to developing a more integrated approach towards the provision of services for the Traveller community, and to improve communication between Travellers and the settled community.

On the basis of this commitment, the NTMAC was established in 2007 as a new national forum for dialogue between stakeholders at national level. The NTMAC replaced the Committee to Monitor and Co-Ordinate the Implementation of the Recommendations of the Task Force on the Travelling Community, which presented its final report 2005. The first meeting of the NTMAC in March 2007 was addressed by the former Taoiseach Bertie Ahern TD, who emphasised the commitment of Government to pursuing practical improvements in service delivery for Travellers and the role the Committee could play in improving communication between Travellers, the state sector and the wider community.

Terms of Reference

The Terms of Reference of the NTMAC are:

1. To serve as a forum for consultation on current issues of national importance affecting the Travelling Community.
2. To identify issues of national importance to the Traveller Community which might not be dealt with adequately through existing mechanisms.
3. To suggest appropriate responses to issues identified under 2 above, in cooperation with relevant state agencies and other stakeholders.

4. To monitor developments in the position of Travellers in Irish society generally and with particular reference to issues identified at 2 above.
5. To report to the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform, every two years identifying key issues of ongoing concern.

At the Committee's first meeting it was agreed that local issues could be raised at the NTMAC where these had clear national implications and raised issues with broader national implications.

It was also agreed that the NTMAC could make a contribution where it would add value to the work of other groups and fora, rather than duplicating work being carried out in other committees. These include the Traveller Health Advisory Committee and the National Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee, which bring together Travellers, Traveller representatives, officials and other stakeholders to discuss issues surrounding specific service areas. In addition a High Level Group on Traveller Issues operates under the aegis of the Cabinet Committee on Social Inclusion to review provision of public services to Travellers.

Membership

Membership of the National Traveller Monitoring & Advisory Committee includes individuals drawn from different sectors, such as Traveller organisations, individual Traveller nominees, Government Departments and state bodies, and the social partners and other interests. The full membership is indicated below.

Kevin Bonner (Chairperson)

Traveller Individual Nominees

Fr. Derek Farrell, Parish of the Travelling People (from 2007)
Ellen Mongan, Traveller Liaison Officer, Galway County Council
Martin Ward, Chair of National Association of Travellers Centres
Thomas McCann, Counselor and Psychotherapist
Fr. Stephen Monaghan, Parish of the Travelling People (until 2007)

Traveller Organisation Representatives

Ronnie Fay, Pavee Point
Emma Jane Hoey, National Traveller Womens' Forum (from 2008)
Catherine Joyce, Irish Traveller Movement
Cathryn Mannion, National Traveller Womens' Forum (until 2008)
James O'Leary, National Association of Travellers Centres

Government Departments

Denis Breen, Department of the Taoiseach
Liam Fitzgerald, Department of Justice, Equality & Law Reform (until 2008)
TJ Fleming, Department of Community, Rural & Gaeltacht Affairs (until 2008)
Jim Ganley, Department of Environment, Heritage & Local Government
Linda Grealy, Department of Justice, Equality & Law Reform (from 2008)
Catherine Linehan, Department of Justice, Equality & Law Reform (from 2009)
Tim McCarthy, Department of Health & Children
Clodagh McDonnell, Department of Community, Rural & Gaeltacht Affairs (from 2008)
Jim Mulkerrins, Department of Education & Science
Brendan O'Leary, Department of Enterprise, Trade & Employment
Colm O'Neill, Department of Social & Family Affairs
Brendan Sheehy, Department of Justice, Equality & Law Reform (until 2009)

Social Partners / Special Interest

Pat Conway, FÁS (from 2008 to 2009)
Ann Gilton, FÁS (from 2009)
David Joyce, Irish Congress of Trade Unions (until 2009)
Jack Keyes, County and City Managers' Association
Tricia Hayes, Mediators' Institute of Ireland (until 2009)
Kevin McCorry, Irish Congress of Trade Unions (from 2009)
Finola McDonnell, Irish Business & Employers' Confederation
Shira Mehlman, FÁS (until 2008)
Mary Lou O'Kennedy, Mediators' Institute of Ireland (from 2009)
Leonie O'Neill, Health Service Executive (from 2009)
Mary Sherry, Irish Farmers' Association

Ministerial Nominees

Pierce O'Malley, Ministerial Nominee, Galway
Mike Kelly, Ministerial Nominee, Galway
Rena Cody, Development Officer, Waterford County Development Board
Alice McGinley, Health Service Executive, Limerick

Mark Callanan, Institute of Public Administration (Secretary)

Other individuals also attended meetings at different intervals on behalf of members who were unable to attend, such as Martin Collins, Damien Peelo, Maria Joyce, Anne Gale, Carmel Sherry, Sean McLoughlin, Tony Downes, Chris Kelly, and others.

The NTMAC has an independent chairperson and secretariat.

Committee Meetings

The Committee has met 10 times, usually in Dublin although meetings have also been held in Galway, Tullamore, Ennis and Mullingar.

To date, the NTMAC has discussed a wide range of issues, which amongst other things have included barriers to implementation of policies and delivery of services, supporting Travellers in education and employment, conflict and disputes within the Traveller community, the media portrayal of Travellers, and the question of recognising Travellers as an ethnic minority. These are elaborated on in the remainder of this report.

Occasional meetings of sub-groups were also held. These were established on a temporary basis to carry out work with smaller numbers of members in specific areas, sometimes involving a number of additional individuals invited to participate. In particular, these sub-groups dealt with the following matters:

- Effective implementation of policies and delivery of public services for the Traveller community;
- Pathways from education to employment for Travellers;
- Participation and integration; and
- Conflict within the Traveller community.

Section 3

The Traveller Community in Ireland

The Traveller community continue to constitute one of the most marginalised groups in Irish society. This manifests itself through quality of life indicators such as low levels of life expectancy, poor educational attainment, poor living standards, high levels of unemployment, amongst others.

Notwithstanding the significant levels of disadvantage within the Traveller community, slow improvements are occurring in different areas. For example, in education virtually all Traveller children are now enrolled in primary schools, and progress has been made in increasing the transfer rate from primary to post-primary education, even if the transfer rate for Travellers is still considerably lower than that for the community at large. Data from the Department of Education and Science shows that there has been a gradual increase in the number of Traveller children in post-primary education, although most Travellers still leave mainstream education by 16 and only small numbers progress to the senior cycle. There are however growing levels of participation by Traveller adults in further education programmes.

In terms of accommodation provision, data from the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government shows that the number of families accommodated in standard housing and group housing has increased steadily in recent years, while the numbers in halting sites or on unauthorised sites has fallen. There remains a shortfall in the number of families that are not accommodated. While the situation has improved considerably on accommodation in many areas, progress has been slower in others, and in some cases the quality of accommodation remains poor.

Traveller awareness of healthcare and the importance of healthy lifestyles has for the most part improved, and this has begun to have an impact within the community. Government reports have suggested that primary care programmes have produced improved immunisation rates, environmental health, nutrition, as well as improved

take-up of a range of healthcare supports such as dental services, GP services, women's health screening, and continuity of care.

Unemployment within the Traveller community remains high, although where Travellers have made the transition into employment, it can produce sustainable results. Travellers also continue to regularly encounter discrimination and racism in their daily lives.

It must be conceded that progress where it has been made needs to be assessed against a backdrop of a low baseline and continuing disadvantage. Travellers continue to fare poorly on indicators used to measure disadvantage, from unemployment, poverty, literacy and education levels, accommodation and living conditions, to health status and life expectancy. While some progress has been made, all would concede that more work is needed.

Section 4

Summary of Work

Having examined work that was already ongoing in different Traveller-related fora, including other national committees, it was proposed that the NTMAC focus on those areas where it could add value by addressing issues not being progressed elsewhere. The Committee decided that it would further its work by setting up three temporary sub-groups dealing with specific issues. The sub-groups were asked to identify priority actions within specific areas that the Committee could address, focussing on those areas where it could add value to existing activities.

The three sub-groups broadly reflected many of the different priorities suggested by members:

1. Sub-group 1 – Effective Implementation (examining issues such as coordination, commitment, gathering of data for monitoring purposes, transfer of good practice to new areas).
2. Sub-group 2 – Progression and Pathways to Work (examining the entire pathway from education to training to employment, including issues such as retaining Travellers in education, benefits issues, barriers to employment).
3. Sub-group 3 – Participation and Integration (examining issues such as political representation and the media, conflict resolution and mediation, local integration plans, the position of Traveller men, women and children, and mental health issues).

Partly due to a number of high-profile incidents that had occurred during the year, it was decided in 2008 to set up an additional sub-group specifically to examine issues surrounding conflict and disputes within the Traveller community.

Sub-Group on Implementation

This sub-group met five times in total and focused on examining the main implementation structures in different areas of service provision to the Traveller community, blockages to progress, data gathering, examining successful project work that had taken place thus far, and ensuring better coordination of county and regional structures.

The sub-group decided to conduct a study into delivery structures in different sectors (such as education, healthcare, accommodation, support for employment, and community development), and describe barriers to implementation as well as factors that can facilitate effective implementation, based on areas where progress has been made, either in specific services or in specific parts of the country. This was based on interviews with key stakeholders in state bodies and the Traveller organizations, as well as a limited number of local case studies. Details of the study are available from the Department of Justice website.

While accepting that Travellers continue to suffer from significant levels of disadvantage and that further work needed to be done, it was recognised that much positive progress has been made in recent years in improving the delivery of public services to the Traveller community at both national and local level. Examples include increasing the retention of Travellers at post-primary schools, increasing the number of Traveller families accommodated, better Traveller awareness on healthcare and improved take-up of healthcare supports, and a wide range of local initiatives. Nevertheless, all accept that further improvements are needed.

The study was designed to facilitate the work of the sub-group by identifying blockages and deficiencies that exist, as well as examining how good practice could be successfully disseminated elsewhere. This and the further work of the sub-group is the basis for the recommendations on implementation of services in section 5.

Sub-Group on Progression and Pathways to Work

This sub-group met four times, and examined issues such as barriers, opportunities and areas of good practice in education, the area of welfare entitlements and benefits and their effect, the risk of creating a dependency culture, employment possibilities and access to employment for Travellers, and changing attitudes to education, training and employment in the Traveller community.

Presentations were given by the Departments of Education and Social and Family Affairs to the sub-group on specific issues to assist the deliberation of the group. The sub-group reached agreement on a series of recommendations, which were presented to the full Committee. These recommendations are listed in section 5.

Sub-Group on Participation and Integration

The sub-group on participation and integration met two times in 2007-08. A number of issues were discussed by the sub-group on participation and integration, including political representation, conflict resolution, the role of the media, and local integration plans.

The sub-group discussed mediation practices involving the Traveller population and conflict resolution issues. For example, the sub-group stressed the need for better awareness of conflict management strategies amongst both children and adults within the Traveller community; better awareness raising of all community mediation services as a preventative measure and to broaden the options for dispute resolution in Traveller related disputes; and the possibility, where appropriate, of incorporating mediation as part of local authority planning procedures in relation to the design and provision of Traveller accommodation.

On media issues, the sub-group proposed writing to the Press Council on its new Code of Conduct for journalists (see below). Discussion also centred on the effects that the negative portrayal of Travellers by the media can have on participation, integration and Traveller-settled community relations.

On participation, the sub-group discussed questions such as how political parties (at both local and national level) could achieve actual participation by Travellers. It was seen as important to establish the current state of play in terms of political participation by Travellers at local level, and to identify what works well and what does not. Some research has been conducted in the area of political participation, and some of the findings on this could be brought forward by the Committee into the future.

Given that a range of issues had been included within the remit of this sub-group, it was agreed that the group needed to prioritise some of the issues they wish to progress, with other areas to be progressed at a later stage.

Sub-Group on Conflict

Partly due to a number of high-profile incidents during the year, it was decided in 2008 to set up an additional sub-group specifically to examine issues surrounding conflict and disputes within the Traveller community.

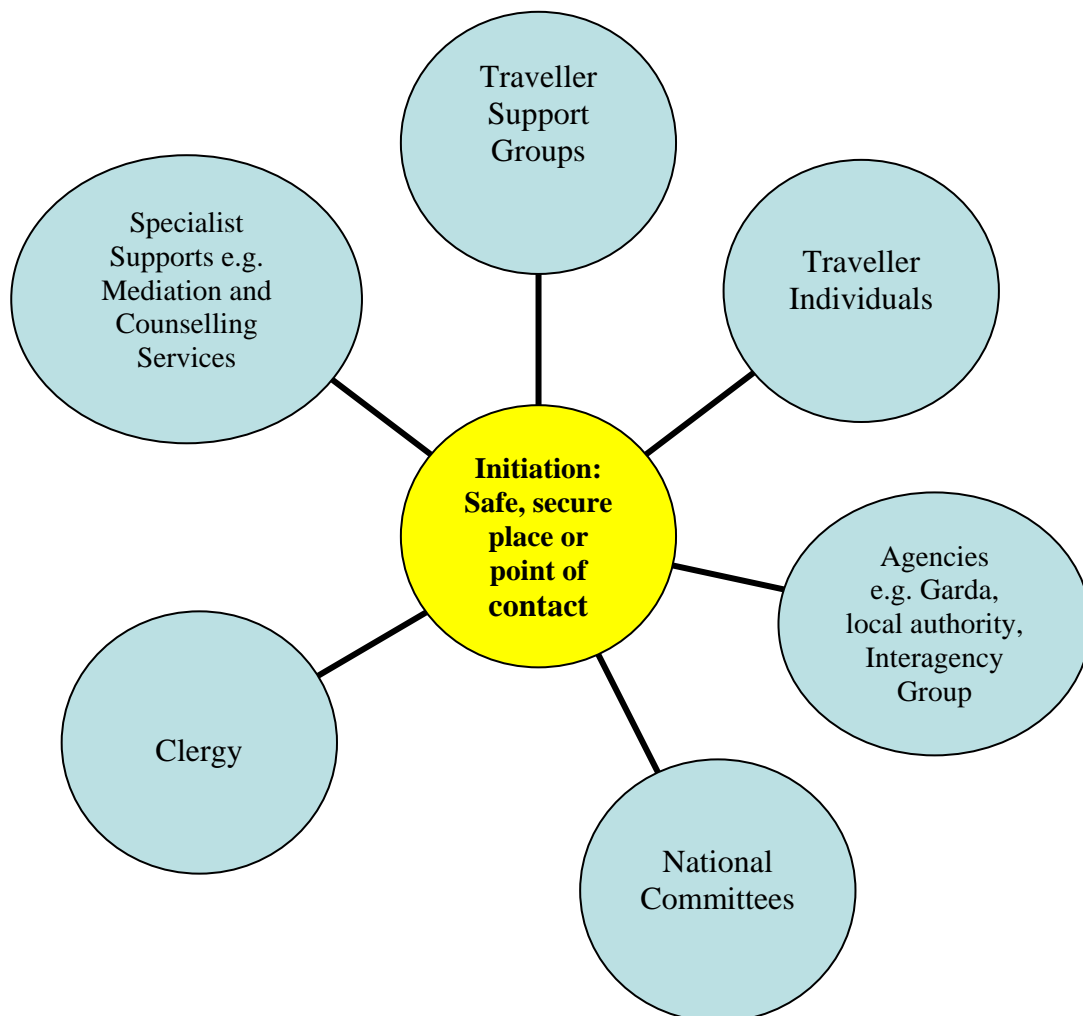
This group met twice, and involved mediators who had been involved in dispute resolution, Traveller organisations, Gardaí, statutory bodies and other NTMAC members. While NTMAC members acknowledged that conflicts and disputes can have a number of different dimensions (e.g. Traveller / settled community, Traveller/ local authority, Traveller / Gardaí, etc.), the main focus of the NTMAC's discussions was on inter-Traveller disputes. There was broad agreement that this issue needed concerted attention.

As a way of illustrating the issues to be addressed in relation to conflict, the NTMAC mapped the various underlying issues and focused on both short-term interventions and long-term initiatives in tackling the underlying causes of disputes. Action is needed on both fronts if we are to seriously tackle the problems associated with conflict in the Traveller community.

Amongst the issues that can underpin disputes identified were disadvantage, economic status, accommodation-related issues, crime, anti-social behaviour and intimidation, alcohol and drug use, community-Garda relations, the length of court procedures, a lack of leadership and role models, family affiliation and power.

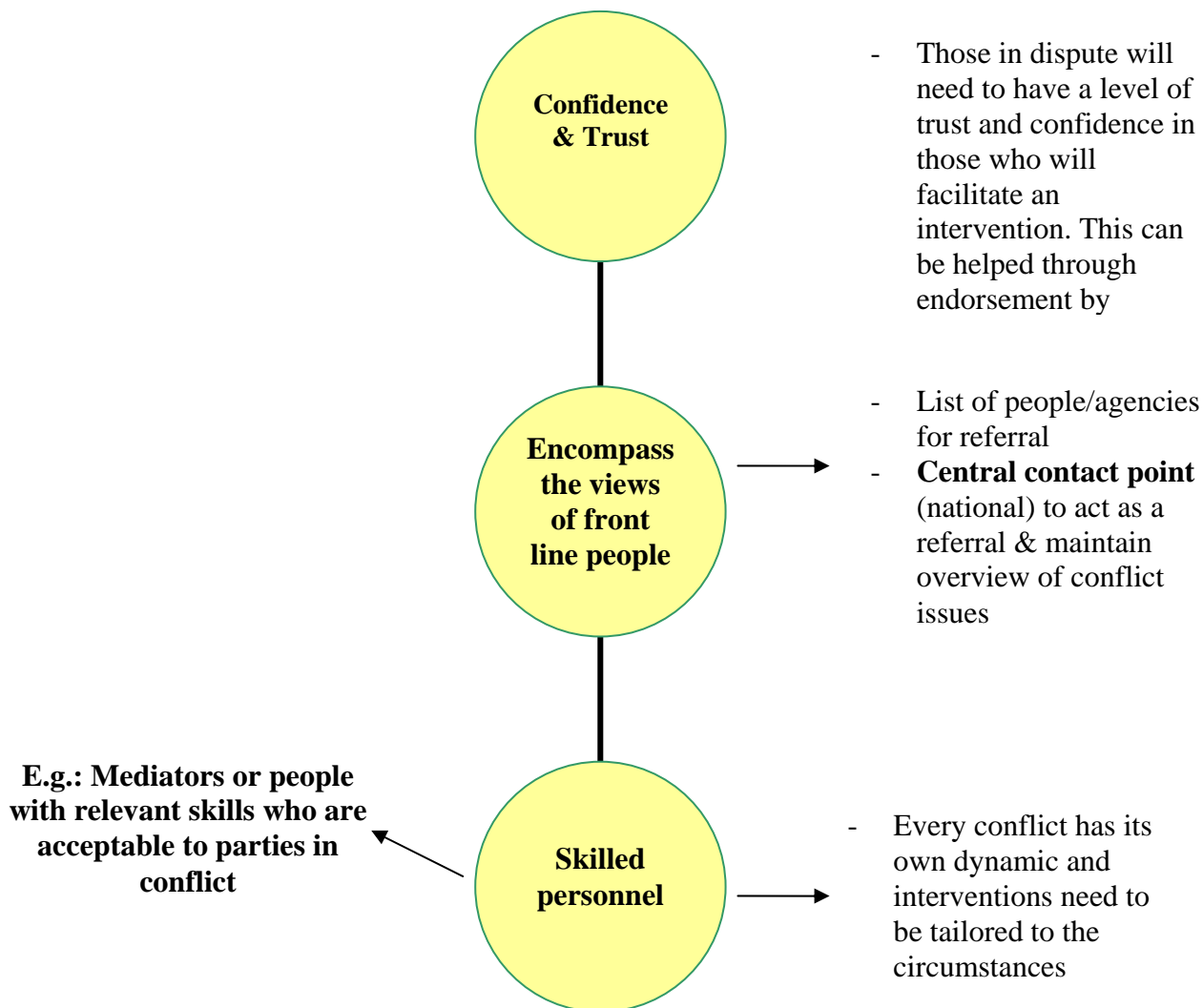
A range of different interventions that have been used to address and resolve conflict and disputes within the Traveller community were also identified. *Short-term* interventions can include support for those seeking to mediate in disputes, ensuring a speedy response from Gardaí and local authorities, and access to the judicial system. Where conflict arises there are a variety of stakeholders who may be in a position to initiate interventions to help resolve the situation (illustrated below).

Potential Initiators of Conflict Resolution



Depending on the nature of the conflict there may be those who feel they cannot initiate a response and it is important that a range of stakeholders have an identifiable route to initiate actions to help resolve disputes.

Elements in implementing short term interventions



While there are a range of agencies and organisations working in the area it would be useful to have a central point of contact and support to help those involved make optimum use of the various resources available through state agencies, Traveller organisations and professional sources such as mediators.

In terms of *longer-term* actions, preventative action is far better than cure, and represents good value for money if it helps people to better manage conflicts and

prevents them developing into full-blown feuds. Some of the actions identified included building capacity within the Traveller community to deal with conflict through education and development work, planning violence out of developments (for example, through better site design), consistent law enforcement to tackle crime and anti-social behaviour and hold those engaged in violence to account, building trust and communication at local level between Travellers and agencies such as the Gardaí / local authorities through community liaison, drug prevention within the Traveller community, counselling for victims (and perpetrators), the need for flexibility and an inter-agency approach, and addressing contextual factors such as the continued marginalisation of Travellers, lack of employment opportunities, etc. which contribute to and sustain conflict.

There is also a need for a national view of conflicts to provide adequate responses (where conflicts can span a number of counties), plus need to compare different situations and responses to them. Co-ordinated responses are also needed between local authorities where people flee an area due to bullying, intimidation, or harassment. It may also be worth considering how codes of conduct, protocols, restorative justice and other alternative approaches could assist in dealing with Traveller conflict situations. Working with young Travellers through schools or other initiatives is also important. It may be useful to develop relevant indicators to monitor progress with conflict resolution – NTMAC could play a useful role in this regard.

The Committee agreed that conflict and disputes have a major impact, most obviously for those victims (Travellers and non-Travellers alike) that are directly affected by violence, but also because conflict in the Traveller community can serve to undermine much of the progress made in other areas such as accommodation, health, education, employment, and can reinforce stereotypes and discrimination.

A number of recommendations made by the Committee in this area are included in section 5 below.

Correspondence

The Chairperson communicated with a number of parties on behalf of the Committee between 2007 and 2009.

The Chairman wrote to the Press Council on behalf of the Committee in relation to the Press Council's Code of Practice, and in particular the fact that Travellers were not originally recognised as a group under the provisions of the code on incitement to hatred, even though the code had included reference to incitement to hatred based on all other grounds of discrimination under Irish equality legislation, such as race, religion, nationality, colour, ethnic origin, or sexual orientation. During 2008, the Press Council decided to amend that Code of Practice to include a specific provision on incitement to hatred against the Traveller community.

During 2007 and 2008, the Committee communicated with the Department of Education & Science over the review of the Senior Traveller Training Centres (STTCs), integration of Travellers into mainstream education, training and youth services, and the re-establishment of the Advisory Committee on Traveller Education. The Department responded giving details of a review of STTCs, and progression routes to mainstream further educational and employment opportunities. It was also decided in 2009 to establish a consultative forum on the implementation of the Traveller Education Strategy.

The Committee wrote to both the Department of Health & Children and the HSE concerning the progression of those trained under the Primary Health Care Programme for Travellers into employment in the health service, and to the HSE concerning the approach to budgetary allocations for Traveller-specific and interagency work at county level. The Department provided information on FETAC accreditation of the Primary Healthcare Programme, and offers of part-time employment that had been made. The HSE also provided the Committee with details on allocations to community health workers and peer support workers, and allocations for Traveller health funding from 1998 to 2009 by region, and expenditure by region for 2008.

The Committee wrote to the Department of Justice, Equality & Law Reform to enquire about the inclusion of Travellers in local and national intercultural initiatives and in anti-racism programmes. The Minister for Justice in responding assured the Committee that the work of the Office of the Minister for Integration in relation to anti-racism is fully inclusive of Travellers, and that general policy development and coordination in relation to Travellers continues as part of the equality brief of the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform.

In 2008, the Committee wrote to the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs enquiring about the reasons for the moratorium in Community Development Programme funding for local Traveller organisations. The Minister of State in responding outlined the Department's approach to reform of community development programmes. The Department has emphasised that Travellers and other marginalised groups will continue to be a focus of the redesigned Local Development Social Inclusion / Community Development Programmes.

The Chairperson also wrote to An Taoiseach in 2007 suggesting that he consider nominating a Traveller as one of his nominees to Seanad Éireann, as a positive signal of inclusiveness, given that Travellers tend to be under-represented in the political process. The former Taoiseach responded that he would give careful consideration to all suggestions for nominations to the Seanad, including the possibility of nominating a member of the Traveller community, while pointing out that there were a large number of talented candidates to draw from.

Traveller Identity

The Committee in 2008 also gave some consideration to the question of recognising Travellers as a distinct ethnic group. Some members of the Committee felt that it was debatable as to whether the majority of Travellers would welcome such a development, and that it could serve to further marginalise Travellers. Others however argued that recognition would have legal and symbolic value and importance.

The Committee discussed a number of matters in this respect, including the question of ethnicity in Irish law, the approach to this issue in other countries, European and international conventions on minorities, the position of Travellers under Irish equality legislation, and the ways in which Traveller identity and culture could be recognised and promoted.

A range of viewpoints were expressed in this respect. Arguments in favour of ethnic recognition advanced by some (though not all) of the Travellers represented on the Committee included:

- Ethnic recognition would ensure that all relevant international human rights provisions (such as the UNCERD Convention) apply fully to Travellers, removing any doubt on this issue, in particular in relation to the EU race Directive.
- Comparisons with UK provisions indicate that Travellers are considered as an ethnic group in the UK, including in Northern Ireland.
- The presence of Travellers in Irish society as a separate identifiable group can be traced back at least a number of centuries.
- It would signal recognition and respect for Traveller identity and place an obligation on state bodies to reflect this in their policies and actions.
- It would help in the empowerment of Travellers by providing a positive acknowledgement of the place of Travellers in Irish history and in modern society, and this would have a powerful symbolic importance for many Travellers.

Arguments against ethnic recognition included:

- Relevant international human rights are applicable to Travellers. EU Directives have been transposed across all of the nine grounds covered in equality legislation (including the ground of membership of the Traveller community) so there is no need for further measures in relation to ethnicity.
- The specific identification of Travellers under equality and other legislation clearly signifies recognition and respect for Travellers under Irish law.

- There is no dispute that Travellers are an identifiable community within Irish society but ethnic recognition would not produce any additional practical benefits – it is more important to secure effective implementation of existing legal and administrative measures and ethnic recognition would not help in this regard.

The Committee was in agreement over the importance of mechanisms to promote and value Traveller culture, even if there was not agreement amongst the members on all of the exact means of achieving this. The Committee was also in agreement that the question of ethnic recognition only contributes to protection against discrimination insofar as groups (such as Travellers) may be able to invoke specific instruments of protection based on ethnicity.

The Committee agreed that this report would set out some of the issues raised, as well as advance a number of points and recommendations on which there was agreement, as well as a number of options with regard to promoting Traveller identity, which are included in section 5.

Outstanding Issues

Many issues were identified by members in 2007 as possible areas that the Committee could address. As noted above, due to pressure of time it did not prove possible to address all of these during the first phase of the Committee's work. However, the Committee would like to note some of these with a view to perhaps returning to them in the future. The issues include:

- Media Portrayal of Travellers – it was suggested that NTMAC might wish to engage with the Press Council on media coverage of Traveller issues, and that in this context it would be useful to have concrete data and statistics on the portrayal of Travellers in the media.
- Measures to promote Traveller identity – for example, various award schemes could be looked at, ways of highlighting Traveller culture and Traveller contribution to society.

- Political Representation of Travellers – how the current under-representation of Travellers in political life could be improved at both local and national levels.
- Traveller / Settled relationships – addressing stereotypes, and focussing on positive examples of good relationships that exist.
- Nomadism – addressing how the tradition of nomadism can best be catered for.
- Dependency culture – the issue of long term dependency, and the attraction of allowances and secondary benefits, while recognising that social welfare and benefits traps have a global impact on many disadvantaged groups.
- Domestic violence within the Traveller community.
- Including Traveller issues within the broader integration agenda.
- Critical health related issues – for example drug use, alcohol abuse, suicide, mental health issues within the Traveller Community.
- Traveller Men – how to develop better engagement with Traveller men and encouraging their participation in representing their community.

The Committee also proposes to further develop its monitoring function with reference to appropriate quantitative and qualitative data. In addition, the Committee anticipates examining the outcome of the All-Ireland Traveller Health Study as a source of monitoring data and to assess whether any issues may arise which might require its attention.

Section 5

Recommendations

A. Implementation of Public Services for the Traveller Community

Recognising

The continuing need for pro-active measures to support fuller participation of Travellers in social and economic life,

That many of the barriers to delivery of existing policies are to do with the operation of mainstream service provision,

The need to consistently build and adapt appropriate infrastructures to enable policy implementation,

That access and engagement with mainstream services must be the overall objective in addressing the effectiveness of policy implementation,

The importance of delivering quality services and good value for money,

The NTMAC recommends that:

1. The Government should use the implementation of Traveller related policies as an explicit benchmark for assessing the performance of agencies in the context of the present reform of public services, and in particular the need for effective interagency working.
2. The Government should mandate a particular Department or agency to act as a driver for effective implementation of policies and strategies, which would hold other Departments and agencies to account and to which Departments and agencies would be required to report. The Committee consider that the

Equality Division of the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform may be the most appropriate structure to act as national driver, given its current Traveller policy development role – it would take responsibility for research and coordination and should report to NTMAC on a regular basis identifying potential implementation barriers or difficulties arising.

3. The Government should also mandate a similar driver to operate at local or possibly regional level to which other agencies would be required to account and which would have discretion to prioritise actions across all agencies in pursuit of national policy objectives and more effective service delivery. The Committee considers that local Traveller inter-agency groups should fulfil this function, given that they operate under the auspices of the CDB and their link with public service providers locally, and their role in coordinating service provision for the Traveller community.
4. The essential principle would be that the drivers would prompt mainstream systems to respond more effectively in pursuit of policy goals and that Departments and agencies would be required to collaborate effectively with the drivers. The drivers, which build on existing structures rather than creating new ones, should have a mandate to fulfil monitoring, development and information functions (further detail on how such central and local drivers might operate is included in Appendix 1).
5. The specific form of the national and local/ regional drivers should be such that they are mandated to interact at very senior level as required at the highest level in the relevant mainstream structures, in particular with regard to pursuing persistent blockages to delivery. This might arise in relation to implementation in a particular area of the country or in relation to specific issues of national relevance.
6. Given its advisory and monitoring role it is considered that the input of the NTMAC should be integral to the work of a central driver, including the process of arriving at the relevant performance indicators for local / regional drivers.

7. The *Transforming Public Services* initiative provides an opportunity to incorporate the concept of a national and local/regional driver as an integral part of the overall mechanisms to support improved service delivery and greater accountability for the performance of public service organisations in delivering on specific outputs and outcomes, with as stated in TPS “underperformance addressed in a clear and structured manner”. This would have the very important effect of demonstrating effective mainstreaming of service delivery in relation to the Traveller community.
8. Data collection for monitoring the implementation of public services for Travellers remains problematical, despite being highlighted as an issue in previous reports. The introduction of an ‘ethnic identifier’ to the use of mainstream services by Travellers can be monitored and evaluation should be pursued as a matter of priority.

B. Progression and Pathways to Work

1. A Forum on Traveller Education should be established to support the implementation and monitoring of the Traveller Education Strategy and report to the Minister for Education and Science on issues pertaining to the implementation of the Traveller Education Strategy.
2. The qualification criteria for Back to Work and Back to Education schemes should be reviewed to assess whether flexibility can be introduced, particularly in the current economic climate, to encourage take-up by Travellers.
3. An exercise should be conducted to profile Travellers that have successfully entered mainstream employment, including those who did so with their identity intact and those who had to hide their identity (either as employees in private companies, or as entrepreneurs) and to identify the factors that contributed to their experience. Lessons could also be learned from extending

the terms of reference to include the experience of other disadvantaged groups in accessing employment.

4. The pilot Special Initiative for Travellers should be continued and rolled out across the country.
5. The pilot Civil Service Traveller Internship initiative should continue to develop, with a focus on next steps for those completing the programme. Consideration could also be given to extending the programme to other public sector bodies and local authorities.
6. When recruitment to the public sector resumes, a minimum target for the numbers of Travellers employed across the public service should be set.

C. Traveller Identity

1. Traveller identity should be upheld and validated on an equal footing with other minorities within Irish society.
2. Despite Equality legislation and the Prohibition of Incitement to Hatred Act 1989 there is an ongoing need to combat discrimination and racism against Travellers, and the Government should ensure that Travellers receive proper consideration and support in any programmes which operate in this area.
3. There is a need for greater dialogue so that state agencies can appreciate the importance of Travellers being recognised as Travellers and how this can be expressed in practice.
4. There is a need to support the positive expression of Traveller identity and diversity within the Traveller community, both to help empower Travellers and to help communicate what Traveller identity is to the majority population.

5. There may be scope for Traveller organisations to communicate a more in-depth idea of what Traveller identity means, what their vision for future generations is, and the difficulties which they see in its expression.
6. The Government should explore a mechanism for a positive recognition of Traveller identity, as an issue of symbolic importance for the Traveller community.
7. Given the Council of Europe's Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities and the United Nations International Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racism and Discrimination Human Rights Committee, the Equality Authority, Irish Traveller Movement, Pavee Point, and the National Traveller Women's Forum amongst others support the recognition of Travellers as an ethnic group, Government should open discussions with these groups on Traveller ethnicity with a view to exploring ways in which this issue can be progressed.

D. Conflict and Disputes

1. There is a need for a central point of contact/ support to which front line people could turn to help initiate conflict intervention and support related actions (this approach could be piloted initially).
2. The Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform, in consultation with NTMAC, should have a primary role in supporting conflict resolution work including the development of relevant support programmes.
3. There should be dedicated funding available to conduct this work.
4. Community Mediation Services should be encouraged and supported to make their services and training accessible to Travellers.
5. Conflict resolution with the Traveller community should be recognised as a specialist area and appropriate training made available to mediators to enhance

their capacity to work in this area. Every effort should be made so that those involved in mediation take up training opportunities.

6. There would be merit in the development of codes of practice on dealing with conflict which would be useful to state agencies, Traveller organisations and the Traveller community in general. NTMAC could play a useful role in this regard.
7. Given the complexity of the issues involved in conflict within the Traveller community, there is a clear need for all stakeholders to work cooperatively to tackle the many difficulties. In this context it is felt that the NTMAC should have an ongoing role in supporting dialogue and helping to identify appropriate measures and supports.

E. Political participation and the Traveller community

1. The Oireachtas should debate the content and recommendations of this report and discuss ways in which Travellers can be supported to increase the levels of participation within current political structures. At national level, a mechanism could be used to ensure Traveller representation in national politics, for example as part of current discussions over the reform of the Seanad.

Appendix 1

Implementation Drivers

1. Both the local and national drivers should support more effective service delivery mainstream agencies by monitoring the work of agencies based on indicators and benchmarks which are specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-bound (SMART).
2. The drivers should be mandated to pursue specific blockages to delivery with identified senior level individuals with operational responsibility in each principal Department or agency. Where blockages at local level cannot be resolved locally, there should be a mechanism for referring such issues to the national level for resolution and follow-up action.
3. The drivers should also have a role in monitoring new or revised strategies to ensure that they are based on SMART objectives.
4. There should be a process for a dialogue between the central driver each relevant Department/ sector to determine the most appropriate SMART indicators which would provide a basis for assessment of progress (some of the indicators already exist in policy and strategy documents but there is a need to identify them as explicit implementation benchmarks).
5. These indicators should be progressively incorporated into the policies, strategy statements and business plans of each relevant agency and integrated into Performance Management Systems.
6. Relevant indicators should be derived which apply both to Traveller specific services and mainstream provision.

7. The central and local / regional drivers should also have a developmental role by working collaboratively with relevant Departments and agencies to:
 - Provide for continuous assessment of Traveller related programmes, including the use of resources for designated purposes to illustrate progress and to inform the adjustment of strategies or structures.
 - Develop ways to adjust or eliminate ineffective or duplicated programmes, at national or local level, in consultation with other stakeholders.
 - Develop ways to incentivise integrated delivery, such as fast-tracking approval and resources for well coordinated interagency programmes which meet policy objectives.
 - Exploit the full range of available data from statutory and non-statutory sources.

8. The central driver should also have a mandate in the identification and dissemination of good practices.

The actions outlined above are considered to be best practice by the NTMAC. However, it is important that the central driver be given adequate resources and staffing to ensure it can fulfil this role.