

## **Traveller youth under-represented in funding of youth work** **(<https://www.activelink.ie/node/115228>)**

### **Call for youth work schemes to better meet the needs of Traveller youth**

Majority of Traveller organisations do not receive any funding for youth work

Almost half of the Traveller population live in counties which have no funded Traveller specific youth projects – according to a new mapping survey launched today by the Irish Traveller Movement (ITM).

The survey, of both Traveller specific and mainstream youth services, has spurred Traveller organisations to call for improved mapping of youth work funding to better meet the needs of one of the most marginalised groups of young people.

The majority of funding for youth work programmes comes through the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth 'UBU' programme – which targets disadvantaged, marginalised and vulnerable young people.

However, the ITM survey found that numerous counties with significant Traveller populations have no Traveller-specific UBU funded youth projects – such as Cork, Limerick and Wexford.

The survey found that while Traveller organisations were more active at engaging with Traveller youth than mainstream youth services – half of Traveller organisations (53%) **receive no funding** for youth work.

*Mapping Youth work for Travellers in Ireland* included data from 93 organisations, 67 mainstream organisations and 26 who were Traveller specific. The ITM is a national advocacy and membership based Traveller organisation representing local regional and national Traveller groups and organisations across Ireland.

The ITM said the survey highlighted that young Travellers need to have equitable opportunities to culturally competent youth work spaces – whether a Traveller specific space, or a mainstream youth work space.

ITM's Coordinator of the National Traveller Youth Programme Rose Marie Maughan said: "The decision-making and allocation of youth work funding should respond to the fact that Traveller youth are a key target group who have a high level of tailored needs due to decades of social exclusion and experiencing anti-Traveller racism in all aspects of their young lives.

"It should allocate funds accounting for the population of Travellers per county (based on the Annual Counts of Travellers), as well as within the context of the broader youth population. For example, the survey found Connaught received an allocation of just 7% of the UBU funding, while 17% of Travellers live in the province. This needs to change and be better targeted so that the needs of young Travellers are met.

"ITM is calling on the UBU programme to resource Traveller youth workers in all counties. And also for positive recruitment of Traveller youth workers in mainstream youth work services, in order to increase engagement with the local Traveller organisations."

Ms Maughan added that ITM is keen to work with all key stakeholders to address the findings of the survey and ensure its recommendations are implemented through its National Traveller Youth Programme.

The survey found that Traveller (52%) and mainstream organisations (45%) both reported educational disadvantage as the most significant challenge experienced by young Travellers.

### **Other recommendations in the survey are:**

- Include ethnic data collection following engagement with Traveller youth to aid monitoring of participation and outcomes
- Include Traveller cultural competency training in mainstream youth services
- Include anti-racism training and policies in all youth services
- Apply outreach and detached youth work by mainstream services to reach Traveller youth (detached youth work means being out of the office / engaging with young people in their own environment).

Speaking at the launch, Laois Traveller Action Group Community Development and Youth Worker Brian Byrne said he has seen first-hand the transformative impact of targeted youth work.

“Young Travellers face significant barriers in education, employment, and social inclusion. Without proper investment, we risk leaving another generation behind. Youth work provides not just support, but also hope, opportunity, and a sense of belonging.

“Laois Traveller Action Group is proud to highlight the story of Dolly Nevin, a young Traveller woman whose life has been transformed through youth work. Dolly is now a strong and inspiring voice for change in her community.”

A panellist at the launch Dolly Nevin said: “Youth work gave me the support and space I needed to believe in myself. It helped me realise that I could make a difference – not just in my own life, but in the lives of others too. Young Travellers face so many challenges – discrimination, lack of opportunity and barriers in education and employment. Youth work gives us a chance to be heard, to grow, and to lead. Youth work changes lives. I’m living proof of that.”

Also speaking at the launch, Cork Traveller Visibility Group Youth Development Worker, Rachel Coffey said: “Youth work should be accessible for all, with a particular spotlight on culturally appropriate spaces to ensure Traveller youth can flourish and grow to their full potential. Investing in Traveller organisations where youth work opportunities arises should be supported given the barriers our youth face accessing mainstream youth services.”

A copy of the survey is available by contacting Rose Marie Maughan at [rosemarie@itmtrav.ie](mailto:rosemarie@itmtrav.ie) (<mailto:rosemarie@itmtrav.ie>)

## Further information

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## About The Irish Traveller Movement (ITM)

Founded in 1990, the Irish Traveller Movement is the national advocacy and membership platform which brings together Travellers and representative organisations to develop collective solutions on issues faced by the community to achieve greater equality for Travellers. It represents Traveller interests in national governmental, international and human rights settings.

### Region

Nationwide

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