

Connected Communities

Researching Young Travellers Mental Health

January 2015



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Details of Organisation

Pavee Point Traveller and Roma Centre is a non-governmental organisation committed to the attainment of human rights for Irish Travellers and Roma. The organisation is comprised of Travellers, Roma and members of the majority population, working in partnership to address human rights issues faced by Travellers and Roma as minority groups experiencing exclusion and marginalisation.

This report was produced by Pavee Point Traveller and Roma Centre with funding support from the Connected Communities youth initiative developed by the National Youth Council of Ireland. The report details the findings of a needs assessment carried out in consultation with eight Travellers youth groups in Ireland between March and May 2014.

Context

In 2008, the WHO declared that mental ill-health is the new global epidemic. Over the past number of years, it has become increasingly clear that suicide and mental health are significant concerns within the Traveller community. According to *The All Ireland Traveller Health Study*,¹ Travellers are six times more likely to die by suicide than non-Travellers. This likelihood increases to seven times when focused on Traveller men.² The reality of this situation is hard hitting: 11% of Traveller deaths are accountable to suicide.

Travellers have been heavily impacted by the onset of Austerity in Ireland, as outlined in *Travelling with Austerity*³ (2013), which highlighted significant cuts to Traveller infrastructure, including cuts of 86.6% to Traveller education, 85% to Traveller accommodation and 76.3% cuts to equality programmes. The community has suffered a particularly high level of disinvestment, compounded by state failure to spend what limited resources are available.

A loss of social and economic support structures, combined with distrust, discrimination and low self-esteem is a combination with a heavy impact on mental health as well as physical wellbeing. The *All Ireland Traveller Health Study* indicates high levels of depression and isolation among Traveller men and women and further highlights a denial of depression which exists in the Traveller community. While mental health services were available, they were perceived as inadequate.⁴

Typically the Traveller community does not engage in discussion around mental health and suicide. Traveller men in particular find this engagement difficult because of their traditional role as providers for the family. Travellers express shame about discussing difficult issues around mental health. It is clear that there is a pressing need for innovative and proactive measures to engage with Traveller young people and provide the conditions for open engagement around the topic of mental health.

This needs assessment was carried out to engage with young Travellers around the topic of mental wellbeing with the ultimate goal of researching the development of an online resource for young Travellers. In the long term, the needs assessment can provide a pathway to decreasing the Traveller suicide rate through the development of a culturally appropriate digital resource that provides a lasting support for those who need it.

¹ All Ireland Traveller Health Study Team, School of Public Health, Physiotherapy and Population Science, University College Dublin (2010) *All Ireland Traveller Health Study : Our Geels, Summary of Findings* (September 2010) at 94

² As above at 95

³ B Harvey (2013) *Travelling with Austerity*.

⁴ Note 1 at 133

Description of Target Group

The research initially set out to engage with young Travellers aged between 15 and 21 years. However, preliminary discussions with young Travellers working on Community Employment in Pavee Point Traveller and Roma Centre indicated that Travellers experience significant struggle and turmoil from the age of 12. Young Travellers indicated that this was due to the transition from primary to secondary school and the need to make new friends, possibly in the face of renewed discrimination. Travellers are recognised effectively as young adults by the age of 14 and are expected to undertake more responsibility than that expected of similarly aged young people in the 'settled' community.

Considerations of Diversity

This needs assessment was consciously developed to include young male and female participants of varying ages. Research workshops were organised for young Travellers across Ireland with participants identified in Leinster, Munster and Connaught.

Details on interagency working

Pavee Point worked in partnership with ReachOut.com during the development of the needs assessment. ReachOut.com staff have provided invaluable assistance in terms of workshop design and have contributed to the development of resources for the needs assessment.

Description of Project

The needs assessment was conducted through a series of workshops with young Travellers in different counties across Ireland. A pilot workshop was facilitated and recorded in Pavee Point with Community Employment participants in March 2014, with the aim of developing the workshop, focusing our goals and ensuring that the workshop design was fit for purpose.

The workshops began with the development of a contract by the group to define a safe space. Participants were asked 'What is Mental Wellbeing?' and invited to contribute answers which were posted on a flipchart page. Topics around mental health and wellbeing were covered using Fotochat⁵, a Traveller specific photographic resource. A series of photographs of Travellers in their daily lives were presented to the group and participants were asked to select a photo or two, and state what the scene shows and how the depicted situation may impact on mental wellbeing.

A World Café approach was used in the third phase of the workshop, with participants revolving in small groups to discuss three questions and consider what it means to be a Traveller, what worries Travellers face, and how to deal with these concerns.

⁵ Traveller Health Unit, Pavee Point Travellers Centre (2006) *Fotochat*

The concept of an online resource was then introduced and Traveller participants were asked to vote on a series of content concepts in order of their preference. These content options included a Blog, Services Directory, Animations, Videos and Social Media. All of these concepts were explained to participants, who were free to ask questions about them.

At the end of the session, participants were provided with a list of services available for them in their local area and directed to national, online services. Participants were presented with a yellow wristband asking “How’s your mental wellbeing today?” and are introduced to the 5 a Day concept of wellbeing and encouraged to engage with it after the workshop.

Participants were asked to fill in a pre and post mental health awareness questionnaire, a registration form and a feedback sheet about the workshop and facilitation at the very end. These resources were deliberately created to be short, enabling quick responses and little writing. Participants were also notified about plans to continue this project into a tangible online resource specifically for young Travellers.

Outcomes

Data was gathered through 10 workshops held in 3 regions, engaging with 88 young participants. Two groups were cancelled at short notice due to a bereavement and a cultural event. No alternative arrangements were available.

The workshops utilised a qualitative method to engage with young Travellers and gain information around worries and concerns. However, a quantitative element is also present, with significant measurements taken before and after each workshop, which demonstrate positive responses to engaging on the topic of mental health.

Pavee Point has now established a core link with ReachOut.com as a result of our working partnership throughout this needs assessment. We are hopeful that this outcome in particular can be to the future benefit of both organisations for mental health considerations in ethnic minority groups.

As a result of the regional workshops, Pavee Point has strengthened relationships with Traveller organisations and has reinforced the national perspective of the Pavee Point Youth Work Programme. These links with young people around the country can be re-utilised in the development of future strategies and resources around young Travellers and mental health.

Knowledge about the impacts of mental health on young Travellers and their awareness of mental health and wellbeing has always been anecdotal. We believe that this project presents fact based evidence about the impacts of mental health on young Travellers for the first time. Given the high suicide rate in the Traveller community, the gathered evidence can

be used to develop a strategy to reduce Traveller suicide and to provide more education around mental health to build engagement on the issue.

Progress Achieved

The data collected through this project has given Pavee Point significant insight into mental health in the Traveller community, particularly for young people. The workshops provide invaluable insight into the awareness and understanding of mental health among young Travellers and indicate that young Travellers struggle to deal with mental health issues.

This research provides Traveller youth groups and organisations with important information about mental health awareness and understanding in the community. This information can be used to formulate training, develop resources and engage with young Travellers around mental health.

Indicators and Evidence

Participants were asked to fill in a Registration form which indicated their gender, age and access to smartphones and computers. Participants were also asked to identify services for young Travellers in their area. This form provided us with crucial data around technology access, which was higher than we had anticipated, and gave us information about young Travellers' knowledge of services, which we found to be extremely limited.

Participants were asked to fill in a Pre Awareness questionnaire, to indicate their understanding of mental health at the beginning of the session. This questionnaire provided us with key statistics about how male and female participants understood mental health and gave us knowledge about the current state of awareness among young Travellers.

During the workshops, Fotochat was used to engage participants in conversations around the impacts of mental health in a Traveller specific environment. The exercise enabled the young people to consider the realities of their own surroundings and how this can impact on daily life, which proved a strong starting point for further conversation.

Participants contributed to a question on "What is mental health?" The answers to this question indicated very clearly that young Travellers do not understand the scope of mental health and wellbeing. Answers were negative for the vast majority of participants.

Three questions were answered in a WorldCafe scenario. These three questions, "What does it mean to be a Traveller?", "What are the big worries Travellers may face?" and "How can young Travellers look after their wellbeing?" were presented on large posters and participants wrote answers down. Facilitators used these answers to ask further questions on specified topics. The posters provided an accurate documentation of engagement.

Participants were asked to vote with three preferences on a series of content options for a Traveller specific online resource. These votes were captured, counted and documented, indicating some clear preferences by participants for what this resource could look like.

Following the workshop, the young Travellers were asked to fill in a Post Awareness questionnaire which was a replica of the Pre Awareness Questionnaire. This exercise indicated the changes in awareness around mental health for young participants.

Finally, participants were asked to fill in an evaluation questionnaire about the workshop itself, including questions on organisation, facilitation, facilitator ethnicity and the possibility of learning more about mental health. The evaluation questionnaire was the best indicator of how successful the workshops were or where they could be improved if repeated.

10 workshops were held nationally, engaging 88 participants, 55 male and 33 female. The groups consisted of young men or young women alone. At least one Traveller facilitator engaged with each group and a female Traveller facilitator was available for female groups.

It was easier to engage with young men throughout the course of this research. This is possibly due to the fact that young Traveller women have less independence than young Traveller men.

Gender Breakdown

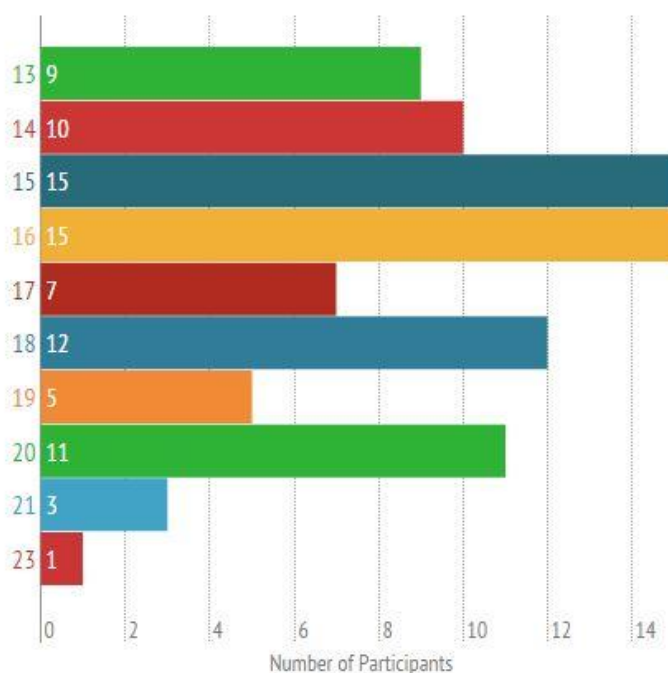


Male Female

n=88 55 Male, 33 Female

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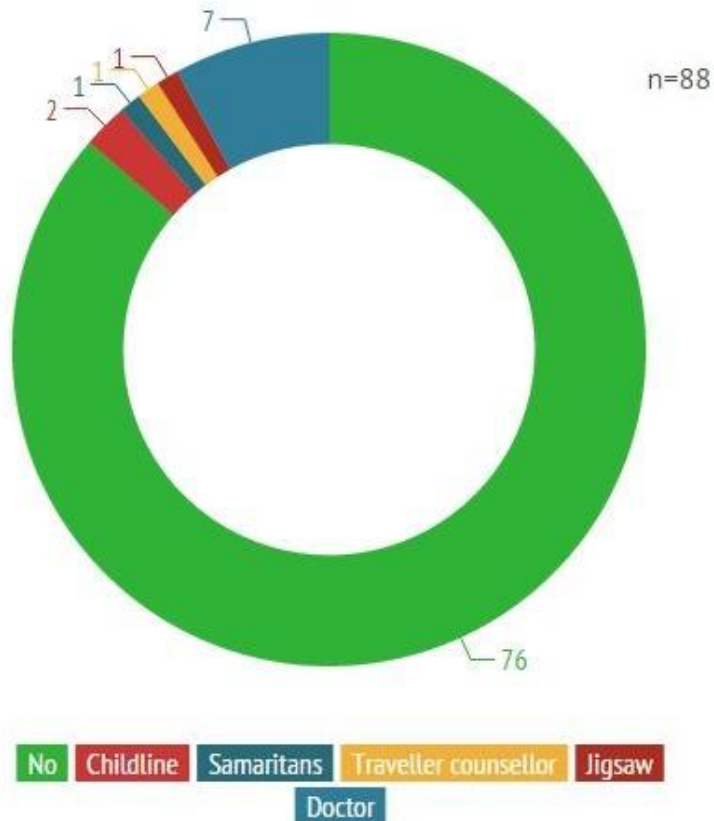
Age Range of Participants



Travellers between the ages of 13 and 23 engaged with these workshops, with the majority of young people aged between 15 and 18. The oldest participant was a female, married Traveller with one child.

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Can you list mental health services for young people in your area?



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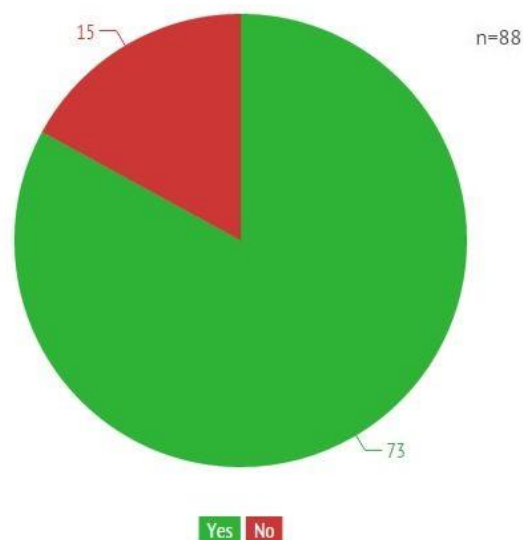
Participants were asked to outline services they knew of in their areas. The answers to this question demonstrated a lack of awareness of mainstream services and indicated a dearth of Traveller specific mental health services.

53 participants answered the question (60% of the 88 participants). 4 participants mentioned mental health services, including Childline, the Samaritans, the Traveller Counsellor and Jigsaw. 7 listed the Doctor. 8 participants were able to list a service that was relevant to the topic of mental health.

Do you have a smartphone?

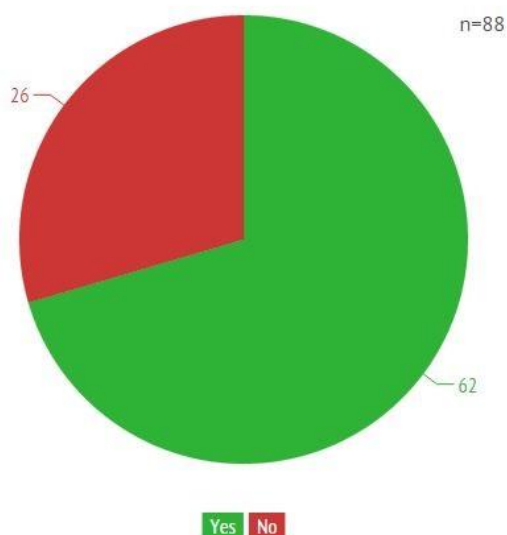
While Census 2011 indicated that over 70% of Travellers have no internet access,⁶ this was not reflected in the young Travellers who participated in this research, 83% of whom owned smartphones, with 70% having access to a computer or laptop.

While more research would be useful on this topic among young people to determine their online habits, this research alone indicates a strong investment in the online and social media world among young Travellers.



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Do you have access to the internet?



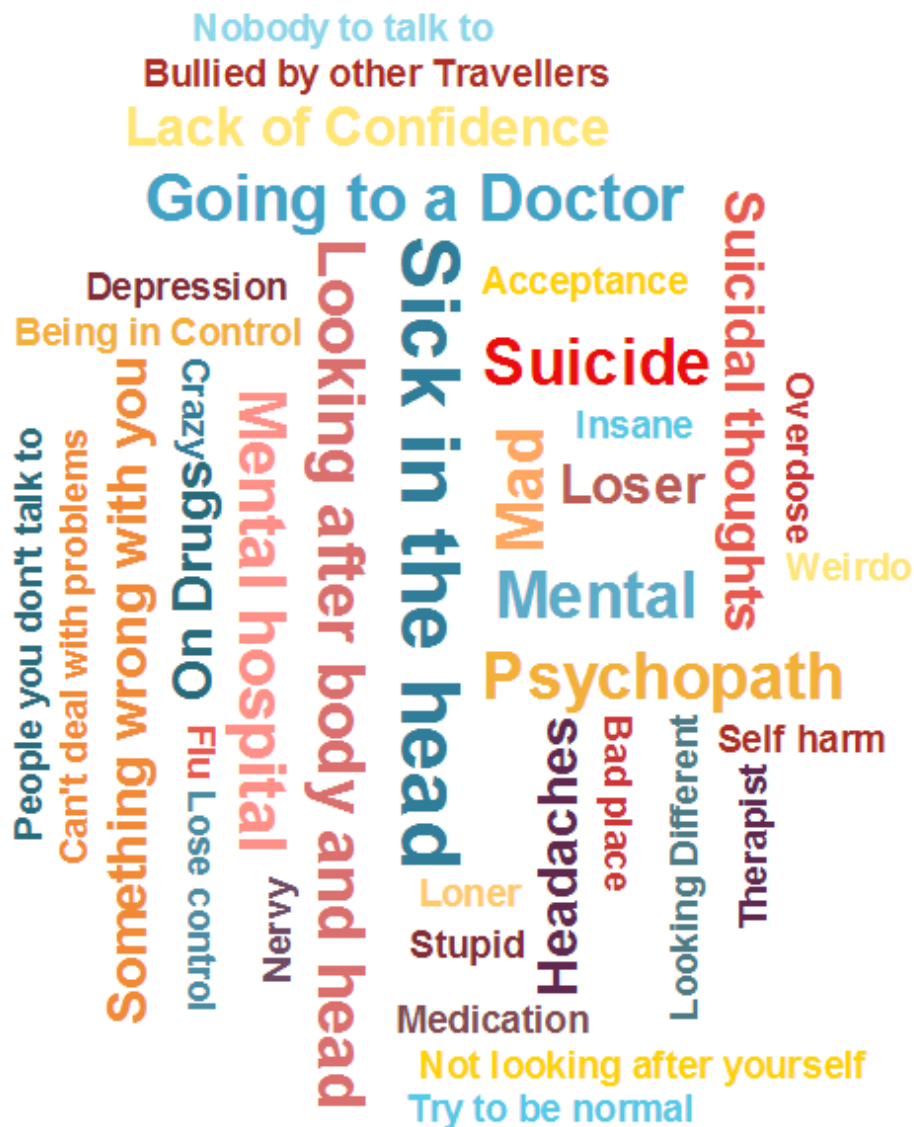
© Pavee Point Traveller and Roma Centre 2014

Access to a smartphone does not necessarily equate with constant internet access, but cheap deals by mobile providers certainly makes this reality more likely. Young Travellers in four groups mentioned consistent access to Facebook specifically.

Internet awareness was also reflected in the voting outcomes, where many participants selected social media as a preferred part of a Traveller-specific youth mental health digital resource.

⁶ All Ireland Traveller Health Study at 38

What does mental health mean?



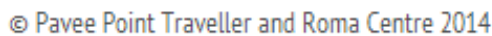
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Introduction

The first question posed to participants aimed to gauge their understanding of mental health. The terminology used by young Travellers to refer to mental health difficulties were negative and there was no general understanding that everybody has mental health, which can be both good and bad depending on many factors at a given time.

Universally, young Travellers were negative about mental health and felt that words like 'psycho', 'mad' and 'loser' were explanations for mental health generally. One participant stated that a person with mental health struggles would be "someone you don't talk to."

It is a concern that young Travellers are so unaware of what mental health means and that so many expressed negative connotations and terminology in explaining it. This is a 'suffer in silence' attitude that was further expressed in the constant idea that worries should be forgotten about or ignored.



Introduction

In terms of Traveller identity, every group mentioned 'Discrimination' and 'Pride' when asked what it meant to be a Traveller. All groups also mentioned 'Family', 'Marriage' and 'Religion'. Every group stated that Traveller culture was different to the rest of society. While there were positive messages about Traveller identity, young participants also identified fears around Traveller feuding. All groups noted larger responsibilities for young Travellers and how there are weighty expectations on them from a very young age.

Pride

Overwhelmingly, participants expressed happiness that they were Travellers and would not change that fact. Just one participant of the 88 hated being a Traveller and, with the exception of her family, said that being a Traveller had no good elements at all.

The core worries facing Travellers are different to those facing members of the majority population. Discrimination, employment, marriage, children and accommodation were major areas of concern for young Travellers. Common topics of debate among young people in the general population, such as emigration, the Leaving Certificate, third level fees and political engagement did not emerge at all in conversation with young Travellers. This was the biggest proof that Traveller-specific resources are needed for young people in the community, for whom mainstream services are of little use.

Travellers nationwide identified similar identity and struggles, with no major urban-rural divide.

Religion

In the course of the Fotochat exercise, at least one member of each group selected a photograph with a religious connotation. In one group, this photograph was selected by a participant who felt that religion could have a negative impact. Every other participant who selected a religious photograph expressed the belief that religion could be helpful and have a positive impact.

During the WorldCafe questions, religion also emerged as a topic of conversation. Young Travellers indicated that religion is less significant for young people than it would have been for previous generations of Travellers. Participants also stated that they felt Travellers would use religion in times of fear or struggle, but did not necessarily engage with the Catholic faith on a daily basis. Young Travellers felt that the community can sometimes use religion in an effort, again, to “forget about their problems.” While religion may be less significant for young Travellers, it nonetheless emerged as a strong factor when they discussed identity.

Role of Women

Female participants mentioned household tasks, particularly cleaning on a number of occasions and noted the expectation that women in the home would carry out this work. Two female groups said this was a worry and a burden. Young men did not highlight any experience of cleaning or maintenance in the home and instead talked about the freedom and independence of life as a Traveller. The young men valued their freedom, but had no awareness that women have a different perspective and experience.

One female participant noted a fear of kidnapping, while two female groups saw ‘scandal’ as having a heavy impact on women. They spoke about the fear of dating and keeping boyfriends secret. It was agreed generally that for a woman to have a child before marriage would be shameful. Women were frightened of bringing shame to their family, while male groups did not mention it.

What are the big worries for Travellers?



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Introduction

While young Travellers identified discrimination as a big part of Traveller identity, they also highlighted it as the most significant worry they face. While many participants mentioned 'Racism' and 'Discrimination' alone, others were more specific and drew attention to discrimination by teachers and name calling. Other issues that led to distress included fears about feuds, unemployment, lack of money, lack of education and addiction.

Discrimination

Without fail, every participant in every group spoke about discrimination, making it the most discussed topic by far. Young Travellers identified discrimination in schools, when seeking employment, on the street and in the media. They told stories about being called 'knacker' and 'pikey' and how it made them feel sad and worthless. Two groups spoke about *Big Fat Gypsy Weddings* and underscored their belief that it is racist and should not be aired. Young Traveller women in three groups spoke about discrimination when booking wedding venues. Seven groups brought up the topic of hiding their identity and making deliberate efforts to be "less of a Traveller" when attempting to enter restaurants and bars. All groups mentioned a similar experience of being turned away from bars on entrance.

One participant said that it was "hard to be a Travellers- people don't like you," while young Traveller women in Galway said that discrimination made them feel humiliated and judged. One Traveller said that so much racism made her feel "lost."

A group of young Traveller men in the East stated that their own GAA Clubs discriminate against them, locking dressing room doors when they are playing, while the players on their own teams also call them names. They remain with the teams because they love the sport.

Participants also said that they felt all Travellers are viewed similarly, but that these are generalisations and affect their confidence. One participant expressed the belief that their communities are hardworking and enjoy helping people, but feel helpless and alone.

Three participants spoke about the issue of criminalisation of Travelling in 2002 and saw this as an extreme form of discrimination by the state. The same participants questioned why more accommodation was not made available if the State did not want Travellers to Travel.

Travellers also mentioned internal discrimination and spoke of their concern that some Travellers judge other Travellers and mentioned bullying as a concern in the community.

Suicide

The high Traveller suicide rate was the foremost motivation for this research and it emerged as a topic in each youth group. However, it was rarely mentioned early in the groups and instead emerged in the last moments of discussions. Facilitators asked young Travellers why there was so much reticence to talk about the issue. Travellers indicated that it was too sad to talk about and indicated that there was a sense of shame about it. Again, participants expressed the belief that it was "better not to think about it."

Sexuality and LGBTQ Travellers

The issue of sexuality has been a heavyweight discussion topic in Irish media over the past number of years. For the Traveller community, it is difficult to engage with and to discuss.

Many Travellers express shame about coming out and are fearful that being gay would prevent them from fitting in with their family and peers.

Sexuality emerged as a topic of conversation in two youth groups. In one young women's group, Travellers outlined a fear that their children would be gay. One female Traveller stated that she sees no problem with it, but she knew other Travellers did and highlighted her fears that her child could be treated differently and doubly marginalised because of their sexuality.

In a second, young men's group, a participant stated his belief that (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender or Questioning) LGBTQ Travellers must be more likely to die by suicide, and further felt that struggles with sexuality was a core reason for the high suicide rate in the Traveller community.

It is clear from these interactions that issues around sexuality need to be addressed in the Traveller community. Pavee Point has recently started work with BeLonG To Youth Services and the LGBT Pavee Forum to engage with Travellers and Roma on the issue of sexuality and hope, in the long term, to create safe spaces for LGBTQ Travellers and Roma. While only a small percentage of participants discussed sexuality in the course of this research, it clearly weighed heavily on participants who mentioned it. We are anxious that any digital resource developed for young Traveller mental health should raise awareness of sexuality and should recognise the existence of LGBTQ Travellers.

Education

Just 1% of Travellers complete third level education according to Census 2011⁷, with 90% of Travellers finishing education before the age of 17.⁸ Travellers typically leave school before their 'settled' peers and often have poorer education outcomes; 28.8% of Travellers express difficulty reading.⁹ The young Travellers who participated in these groups indicated that peer pressure played a role in their leaving school. Participants said that when all of their friends were leaving, they felt they should also leave. Several participants said that there was no pressure at home for them to stay in school.

Five participants had difficulty filling in the simplified questionnaires during the groups and needed significant support from facilitators.

Discrimination in school also played a role in the majority of their lives, with one participant recalling a teacher giving him a colouring book and seating him at the back of the classroom when he was fifteen years old. When asked if students or teachers were more inclined to discriminate against them, the young participants universally stated that teachers were a larger source of discrimination.

⁷ Central Statistics Office, *Census 2011 Profile 7- Religion, Ethnicity and Irish Travellers* at 32

⁸ *Ibid*

⁹ Our Geels: The All Ireland Traveller Health Study, *Selected Key Findings and Recommendations* (2010) at 10

Economy and Employment

There was a broad awareness among young Travellers that they are unlikely to be employed as part of the general Irish labour force. The Traveller unemployment rate is 84.6%.¹⁰ In the worst days of the economic downturn, the general population saw a high unemployment rate of 14.9%, with youth unemployment peaking at 31.3%, with these unemployment figures generally accepted to be a national crisis.

Young Travellers accepted the fact that they are unlikely to find employment and reflected an awareness that this is in part due to leaving school earlier and having fewer qualifications. Participants equated employment with having to hide their identity and strongly believed that a settled person “would get any job before one of us.”

Drugs and Alcohol

Drugs emerged as a concern in all groups, with young Travellers worrying about the effects of drugs on families and highlighting the fear that Travellers involved in drugs are likely to get hurt or end up imprisoned. When discussing how to deal with problems, all groups made a point of saying that it was necessary to stay away from drugs.

In terms of alcohol, young Travellers were less wary, with several people in each group saying that they would go for a drink with friends if they felt bad or were worrying about something. Conversely, participants also noted that drink should be avoided when trying to cope with problems.

While some Travellers were aware that alcohol can be damaging, there was a wider attitude that alcohol is not a significant problem.

Accommodation

All groups discussed accommodation. In particular, a young women’s group in the West highlighted their struggle to find accommodation because the county council refuses to establish a group housing scheme. In Dublin, some young Travellers living in Finglas highlighted the overcrowding on sites, with young families living in trailers behind their own parents’ houses.

In the course of this research, we met and engaged with Travellers in a variety of accommodation, including official halting sites, group housing schemes, standard and private rented accommodation. Some Travellers living in houses expressed a desire to live in trailers, while a group of young women living near one preferred to live in houses.

¹⁰ Central Statistics Office, *Census 2011 Profile 7- Religion, Ethnicity and Irish Travellers* at 33

Finance

Eight groups discussed money, with participants who brought up the topic fearing that they would never have enough money to provide for their families. One male participant stated that “you take work where you find it” because otherwise there would never be enough money to live.

During the Fotochat exercise, two participants selected photographs of money and when asked to explain why they had selected the photograph, one young man said “I wish I had it.” The second was a young woman who said that she worried about it all the time.

Feuds

Feuds, bare knuckle fights, fighting videos and family fights were mentioned, with some element of feuding mentioned in all groups. Young Traveller women were concerned that Traveller men could be hurt in feuding, which three of the women referred to as “stupid” and “pointless.” One young woman stated that being a Traveller is “all about your surname” and felt that tribalism has a huge impact on Traveller families.

Five groups highlighted that Travellers die younger and young women in particular expressed a fear that their family members could be killed in fights. The idea that Travellers die in feuds weighed heavily on the young women in particular. Male participants were less emotionally expressive about the issue of feuds, but all young men’s groups mentioned it as a problem.

How can young Travellers look after their wellbeing?



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Introduction

The three posters (See Appendix 2, p32) used in the WorldCafe discussion indicated a strong awareness of Traveller identity and young Travellers easily expressed the things that cause them worry. However, every group struggled with the third poster, expressing very limited knowledge of how to deal with the worries they had earlier outlined.

Physical and Mental Health

In relation to dealing with the worries and concerns, young Travellers often equated physical health and dealing with problems. While this is indicative of a wide awareness among young Travellers that diet, physical activity and social interactions are important, these things will not address the worries or concerns that lead to poor mental health. Just one participant felt that he would need to “Get to the root of the problem before it gets worse.”

While many groups said that they should engage with their issues and talk to someone, including parents, doctors or friends, when pushed all participants agreed that this would not happen in reality. The largest suggestion was to ‘talk to people’, but most participants clarified that this was in a social way and again would be helpful when attempting to forget troubles.

There was a very clear message from all groups that the best way to deal with a worry was to “Not think about it” and to focus instead on distracting attention from the issues. This was endemic and is concerning, indicating a need to engage with Travellers to change an entire attitude and outlook as opposed to merely providing a support or service.

Image

When asked about how to deal with their issues, young participants focused on physical aspects of life, including personal image and style. Young women in particular mentioned shopping, make up and getting dressed up as a good way to feel good about themselves. Sunbeds were mentioned in six groups but only considered a problem by one single participant, which is concerning given the long term health problems associated with sunbeds.

Awareness of issues impacting Mental Health

Pre Workshop



Post Workshop



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The Pre and Post Awareness questionnaires gave us a chance to understand awareness before the workshop and also gave us insight into whether or not the discussions facilitated more knowledge and understanding among young Travellers, especially when they may not previously have discussed mental health.

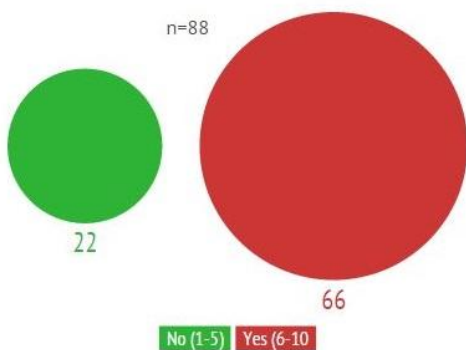
Before the discussions, many young Travellers selected lower numbers and indicated to facilitators that they would be unwilling to engage with others when it came to mental health, either to seek help or to provide support. In the aftermath of the group, the majority of young Travellers reflected a willingness to engage with others on the issues and also indicated a wider understanding of the issues that cause them strain and worry on a daily basis.

Do you feel comfortable talking to others if something is worrying or upsetting you?

Pre Workshop



Post Workshop

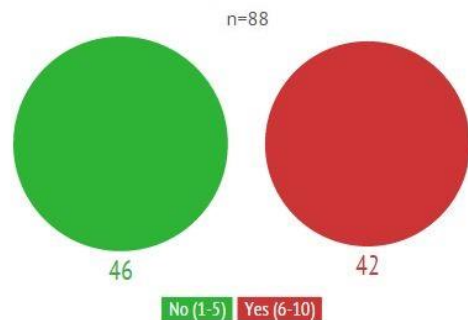


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A key improvement was seen when young Travellers were asked if they would seek help or advice from others if they felt worried. Before the workshop took place, only 33 participants gave an answer of 5 or higher for this question. When the workshop was complete and participants were asked again, 66 gave an answer of 6 or higher, a total of 75% of participants.

Would you feel confident to talk to a friend about their mental health if they mentioned it to you?

Pre Workshop



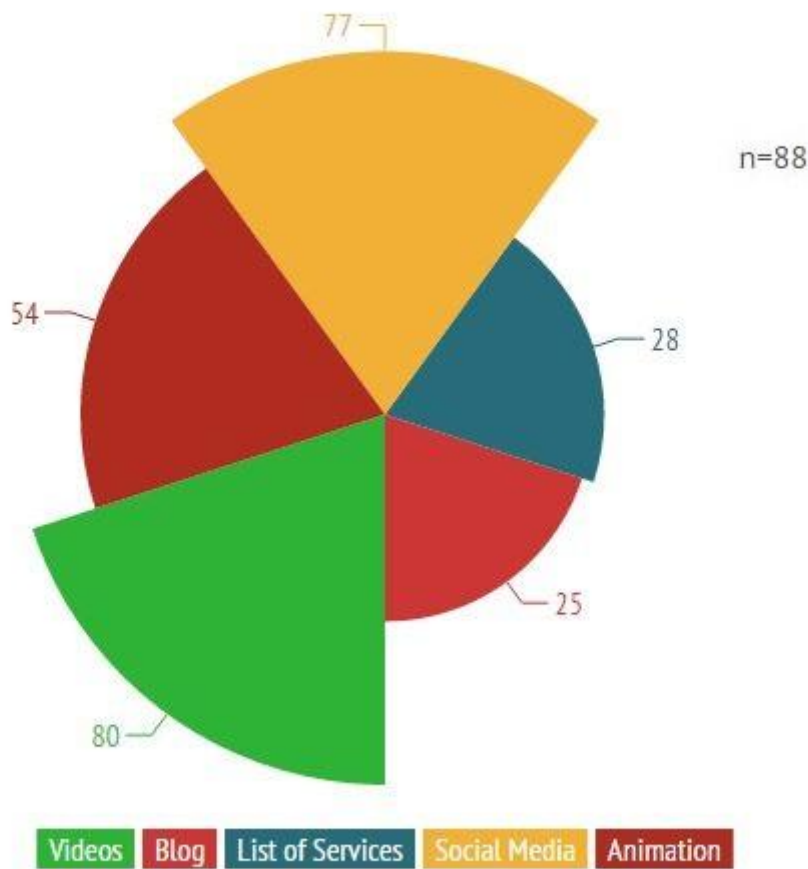
Post Workshop



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An improvement was also noted when Travellers were asked if they would be comfortable helping others who needed support. Before the workshop, 42 participants gave a score of 6 or higher, but afterwards, 74 indicated the higher level of comfort, a total of 84% of participants.

Voting Preferences



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These figures indicate strongly that young Travellers learned enough from the workshop to increase their comfort around these discussions, breaking down some stigma.

Participants favoured interactive and audio visual content in any digital support resource, with very few votes cast for a list of services in each region or for a text based blog on different issues

facing young Travellers. Participants selected their top three choices for content on a new support website. While more work is needed to determine the actual content for any such resource, participants were clear on what forms they would like a resource to take.

The total 264 votes break down as follows:

- 80 votes for Videos, a total of 30.3%
- 25 votes for a Blog, a total of 9.4%
- 28 votes for a List of Services, a total of 10.6%
- 54 votes for Animation, a total of 20.5%
- 77 votes for Social Media, a total of 29%

Clearly Videos and Social Media were the most popular options, a combined 59.3% of the vote. The third preference was for Animation, with over a fifth of participants expressing an interest in it. 20% of participants selected the Blog or List of Services as a preference.

It is evident from this preliminary voting exercise that young Travellers are more likely to engage with social media and watching videos than by reading explanations by text or seeking text based or service-based support.

Changes/Adaptations

While we intended initially to talk to young Travellers over the age of 15, preliminary discussions with young Travellers indicated that this should be lowered. In the spirit of the Pavee Point Youth Programme, this was a youth led decision, with young members of the community suggesting that Travellers aged 12 should be engaged with this research.

Following the pilot group, the project implemented a world café approach to the three core questions asked during the workshop, meaning that each participant would have a chance to consider each question. We believe that this enabled stronger learning both for the participants among themselves and for project coordinators.

Branding

Pavee Point operates a popular website which is updated weekly and has roughly 4000 visitors each month. We also operate social media channels and forward a monthly eBulletin to almost 1000 people. Calls for participants were issued in our March and April eBulletins and on our website. The Connected Communities branding was used for these, and was also used on our Facebook pages when similar calls for participants were made.

Conclusions and Recommendations

1. Mental Health in Youth Work

The findings of the report allow us to conclude with certainty that mental health is a primary concern for young Travellers and that support services are currently inadequate for their needs. 100% of those interviewed highlighted persistent discrimination as a core part of their identity.

We believe that strong, Traveller led mental health services and supports are necessary to encourage discussion around mental health and depression in the Traveller community. Traveller organisations can prioritise work on mental health in the Traveller community, building on the work of over 300 Traveller Community Health Workers in Primary Health Care Projects across Ireland.

2. LGBT Outreach

A number of groups we engaged with discussed sexual orientation and being gay as a trigger for mental health difficulties, noting the complications of coming out in the Traveller community and fears about sexuality. Some participants felt that an inability to discuss sexuality openly was a contributing factor to the high rates of suicide in the Traveller community. Several participants also mentioned fears that their own children would be gay, expressing concerns that they would face multiple discrimination.

There is a clear need to tackle issues around sexuality and gender identity in the Traveller community at all levels and not just for young people. We recommend that (Lesbian, Gay, Transgender and Questioning) LGBTQ outreach is started with young and older members of the Traveller community with some intergenerational focus to open dialogue in the community about sexuality.

Pavee Point Traveller and Roma Centre, BeLongTo Youth Services and LBGT Pavee came together in 2014 to produce the first LGBTQ Traveller and Roma poster, which was developed in consultation with Traveller, Roma and LGBT youth groups to increase the visibility of LGBTQ Travellers and Roma both in their own communities and in wider society. The poster has been distributed to youth centres and Traveller organisations nationwide, aiming to build a greater culture of acceptance for LGBTQ people. This work should continue to develop into a longer process of inclusion to create national safe spaces and increase dialogue about sexuality in the Traveller and Roma communities.

3. Education Outreach

In the course of this research, it became clear that there is no uniform approach to positive mental health in the secondary school system in Ireland, particularly in the early years of secondary education. According to Census 2011, 21.8% of Travellers whose education had ceased were educated to lower secondary school age. Positive mental health and coping mechanisms should be imparted to young people from all ethnic backgrounds at early ages. Due to a larger instance of early school leaving in the Traveller community, it is imperative

that mental health support and information is available to students in early second level education.

When investigating local mental health services in the counties we conducted research, it was obvious that there is a dearth of services for young people and a near complete absence of Traveller specific mental health services. Young people were vastly unaware of services and while Mindfulness programmes and Mindout are run in some schools, no programme appears to be implemented across the board.

While it would be easy to presume that youth workers can fulfil this role, the reality is that young people engaged with a youth service are not those most in need of vital support structures. We recommend the development and implementation of a positive mental health programme in all second level schools, with specific focus on Travellers and Roma. Such a programme should be developed in consultation with Traveller and Roma groups, given the extremely high suicide rate in the Traveller community and the similar socio-economic disadvantages faced by members of the Traveller and Roma communities.

4. Resource Development

Given the surge of awareness around social media and particularly Facebook among young Travellers with an increased level of smartphone use, we believe that a digitally based resource website with strong social media marketing could be used to inform Travellers about mental health, health concerns for young people, LGBTQ issues and suicide concerns online. Such a resource would need substantial support and input from young Travellers to make it useful and sustainable for the future, but could easily address the many issues that led to mental health concerns for the young Travellers who participated in this research.

5. NTRIS and Action Plan Against Racism

It is eminently clear that there is a widespread experience of racism and discrimination in the Traveller community, which is both a result of and in turn facilitates inequalities faced by Travellers in the areas of education, health, accommodation and employment. Ireland has developed a National Traveller Roma Integration Strategy (NTRIS) on foot of the EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies up to 2020. However, in 2013 the European Commission was critical of Ireland's strategy. A progressive National Traveller Roma Integration Strategy must be developed and implemented with firm and achievable goals, timeframes and with full Traveller and Roma participation and consultation.

Ireland's national Action Plan Against Racism ended in 2008 and has not been renewed, while the National Consultative Committee on Racism and Interculturalism (NCCRI) was closed down in December 2008 with the onset of austerity. The NCCRI took a very pro-active approach to working with Travellers, among other ethnic minority groups. It is necessary that an independent advisory committee be re-established to advise government on addressing racism. We also believe that it is vital that a new National Action Plan Against Racism developed and implemented.

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We are hopeful that with the support of Connected Communities, the results of this project can be the first step on the long road to opening dialogue about mental health in the Traveller community. We hope that this assessment can be used by groups and individuals nationwide to support services for young Travellers.

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Appendix of Resources

1. Workshop Registration Questions



PAVEE POINT
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Workshop Registration Questions



Personal information

Age: _____

Gender: _____

Do you have access to a smart phone?

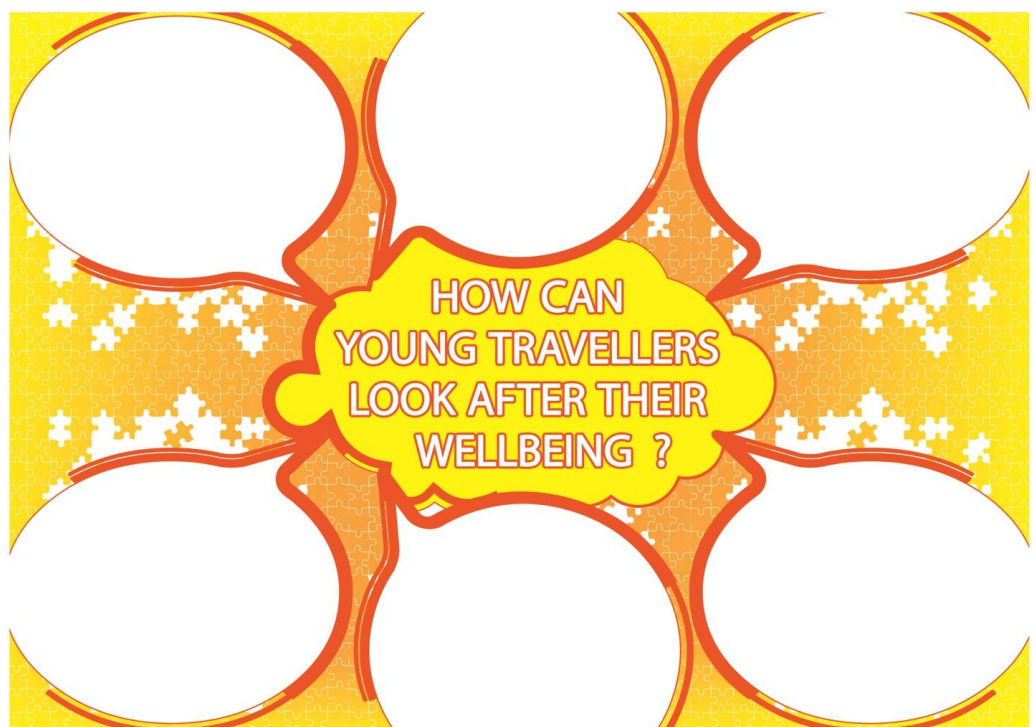
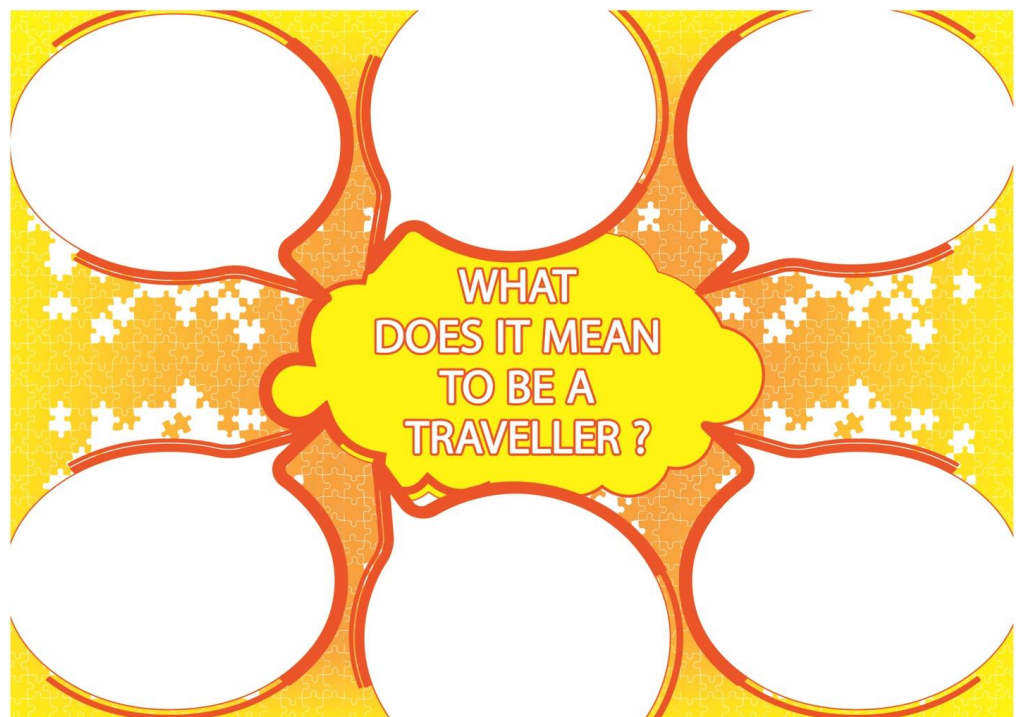
YES ☐ NO ☐

Do you have access to a laptop?

YES ☐ NO ☐

Can you name services for young people in your area?

2. Workshop posters



3. Wristbands



4. 5 a Day for your Mental Health handout



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TRAVELLER AND ROMA CENTRE

5 A-Day for Youth Mental Health



It is as important to have a healthy mind as it is to have a healthy body. If we are out of shape we can exercise. But what do we do if our minds are not in a good place.

Think of the 5 a-day to reconnect with yourself.

Connect

Connect with people around you, family, friends, school, college, work, youth club, sports club etc.

Be Active

Make healthy food choices when you can, become more active, sleep well, and learn how to relax.

Take Notice

Notice how your thoughts effect how you feel, don't treat all of your thoughts as though they are facts, keep an open mind.

Keep Learning

Try to learn something new from each day about yourself, a friend or the work we live in. Personal development is possible for all.

Give

Get involved in something you like or care about. Volunteer or help somebody out. The easiest thing we can all give to one another is a SMILE.

5. Pre and Post Awareness Questionnaire



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Workshop Awareness Questions



Age: _____ Gender: _____

On a scale of 0-10 (0 being the lowest 10 being the highest) please answer the following short questions.

1. How aware are you of the different things that impact on young Travellers lives?

0-----1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6-----7-----8-----9-----10

None

Some

High

2. How aware are you of the things that positively and negatively impact on your mental wellbeing?

0-----1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6-----7-----8-----9-----10

None

Some

High

3. Do you feel comfortable talking to others if something is worrying or upsetting you?

0-----1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6-----7-----8-----9-----10

None

Some

High

4. Would you feel confident to talk to a friend about their wellbeing if they mentioned it to you?

0-----1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6-----7-----8-----9-----10

None

Some

High

6. Evaluation Questionnaire



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Workshop Evaluation Form



Please respond to the following statement by using the rating scale below to show your level of agreement or disagreement. Please circle the number that best suits.

4=Strongly Agree

3=Agree

2=Disagree

1=Strongly Disagree

The workshop was well organised	4	3	2	1
The information presented was useful	4	3	2	1
The facilitators provided enough time for questions and answered them satisfactory	4	3	2	1
This session increased my knowledge and understanding of mental well-being	4	3	2	1
The session worked well and allowed me to add something and learn from others	4	3	2	1
The mix of settled people and Traveller facilitators worked well	4	3	2	1
The session would have worked better with all Traveller facilitating	4	3	2	1
The materials used were helpful	4	3	2	1
The facilitators were helpful throughout	4	3	2	1
I would be interested in learning more about mental well-being	4	3	2	1