

Waterford Area Partnership CLG

Social Inclusion & Community Activation Programme

Case Study 2022

Traveller Community Outreach Project with Mincéirí Port Láirge

Theme: Engagement Strategies with SICAP Target Groups/Communities.

Context

In presenting our case study Waterford Area Partnership Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme reflected on the outreach project we developed with Mincéirí Port Láirge over the past 16 months. The engagement approach outlined within this report provides strong insights into our approach, the learning we gained and the outcomes for the Traveller Community. This is an illustration of how SICAP can respond to local needs with one of our key issue based groups.

This case study does not highlight anything new and those who read it are well aware of the challenges facing the Traveller Community within society in accessing resources and supports to make meaningful changes in their lives. Our approach was informed by discussions held at Waterford Traveller Interagency Group (WTIG) in the development of its 3-year Strategic Plan, launched in May of this year. Mincéirí Port Láirge (formerly known as Waterford Traveller Community Development Project) asked for WTIG members to actively engage with them in looking at progression pathways for the Traveller Community based on the emerging core themes. Another aspect of the project was the development of a community engagement pilot in Carrickphish area of Waterford city. This had emerged from a meeting with key stakeholders co-hosted by Waterford City & County Council CEO, Michael Walsh and Mincéirí Port Láirge. This created a SICAP cross goal approach to strengthening our work with the Traveller Community which this case study reflects.

Waterford has a very strong, vibrant and dynamic Traveller project, Mincéirí Port Láirge who have advocated relentlessly since 2002 for change at a local and national level to improve the quality of life for all members within the Traveller Community. Throughout Covid-19 they maintained their support to families experiencing extreme challenges in adhering to public health guidelines due to their living conditions. During this time Waterford Traveller Interagency Group, had commenced the process in developing a Needs Analysis and Strategic Plan to include consultation with the community. The issues highlighted within this process are in line with the National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy 2017-2021 and included racism and discrimination with education and employment as day-to-day personal challenges which those within the Traveller Community experience.

Within Ireland's communities Traveller families are an Irish indigenous group with strong pride in their culture, history and family structure. After many years of struggles the Traveller Community were finally recognised as an ethnic group within our society in March 2017. In doing so Ireland strengthened its moral and legal duties in equality and human rights however the ongoing challenges of racism and discrimination still persist and are experienced daily by members of the community. We all have an obligation to work toward an inclusive society where everyone is respected and people can state their race and ethnicity with pride. Our responsibility is a just and equal society for all our citizens and even more so for those of us who work in the fields of public and private services.

Challenges do exist within the cultural norms of the Traveller Community based on their historical nomadic life where to become sedentary, attend school and take up employment was not most Travellers' lifestyle. Many who are choosing to do so now however wish to stay true to their culture and not face discrimination due to their ethnicity, name or address. For many within our society, (and this includes professional workers within the community and public bodies who have a responsibility to advocate for the community) we are challenged by some of the cultural norms such as marrying young, nomadic lifestyles, housing environments and often patriarchal family structures. For those within the Traveller Community who wish to follow their own path in

achieving personal goals, they should find an openness within society to be able to do so. We must acknowledge that this, at times, puts Travellers at odds within their own families as they 'step outside the box'. All of us can relate to needing someone who will give us guidance and to show faith in what we, as individuals try to achieve. Building our self-confidence and belief in ourselves to achieve our goals is critical to each and every one of us.

If we are to affect change, and for Ireland to be an inclusive and just society, all of us including those within the Traveller Community must create an environment of mutual respect and opportunity. This case study is based on striving to create such an environment and while there were strong positive outcomes the barriers for the young adults to progress are also highlighted. Many of the barriers are acknowledged as not being within the remit of SICAP or Mincéirí Port Láirge to address and require other partners to collaborate to ensure progression.

Key questions arising from the case study for all national and local stakeholders is 'when are we going to say it as it is - that inequalities exist on a day-to-day basis for individuals within our communities? When and how can we provide the wrap around supports that will create an environment of possibility for all?

*I'm looking at the man in the mirror
and asking him to change his ways.*

Michael Jackson 'Man In the Mirror' 1998

The Traveller Community, SICAP and Waterford Traveller CDP can strive to achieve it at a local level however it will require all stakeholders to be held accountable for their role in breaking down the barriers and making the change.

Acknowledgement:



Waterford Area Partnership wish to thank Mincéirí Port Láirge for their openness and collaborative approach in developing this project. The learning we, as staff and SICAP gained from our meetings and reports is invaluable to us as we implement current and future actions.

To *Úna Ryan, Project Joint Coordinator and Karen Reilly, Community Development Worker* a sincere thank you for sharing your vast knowledge and experience of the Traveller Community, their rich culture and

traditions. Our regular meetings and discussions were thought provoking and at times challenging for both organisations due to programme limitations and cultural sensitivities.

As stated by *Úna* in the final progress report the approach we developed 'is a fresh start in the working relationship between the two organisations'

Background

Through the development of Waterford Traveller Interagency Group (WTIG) the issues continuously emerging were to address discrimination and provide meaningful pathways to education and employment. Mincéirí Port Láirge in advocating on these issues asked for partners to work collaboratively on creating opportunities to change the current position being experienced by those within the Traveller Community.

In September 2021 Mincéirí Port Láirge and Waterford City & County Council co-hosted a senior agency staff meeting to look at the learning for Waterford from the Children's Ombudsman's Report 'No End in Site'. The report was based on an investigation into the living conditions of children on a local authority housing site (not within Waterford) and highlighted key issues affecting children's and young people's health, safety and lack of amenities. Members of the Traveller Community engaged in the development of the report presented on the recommendations which led to a strong discussion on Waterford's response which acknowledged the role of the council, HSE and other key stakeholders in implementing outcomes. Within the discussions community engagement and integration approaches to promote inclusion were raised especially in areas where there are halting sites and Traveller specific housing. WAP recognised their role in exploring models to enhance engagement which initially formed part of this project.

Waterford Area Partnership (WAP) SICAP followed through on the request of Mincéirí Port Láirge and arranged an informal meeting which was held in our local People's Park on blankets on a beautiful sunny day. *Catherine Power and Liz Riches, SICAP with Una Ryan and Karen Reilly from Mincéirí Port Láirge* had a lively conversation which challenged SICAP to look at alternative methods of engaging young Traveller adults in education and training. While the focus was on these issues, the living conditions of the Traveller Community was recognised as a major challenge for many members of the community in progressing their personal goals. This was the beginning of many such lively and informative meetings over the coming months as we developed our project.

WAP acknowledged the limitations of Mincéirí Port Láirge resources to undertake additional work and it was agreed to develop an outreach project with funding provided to extend an existing staff members hours to undertake the project. The project would focus on two aspects: one being to create opportunities for Traveller young adults to progress to further training and employment and the other on exploring a community engagement model in Carrickpherish area. While SICAP could provide some funding resources the knowledge and expertise of Mincéirí Port Láirge was critical to achieving outcomes and add value to the current work being done.

The timeframe for the delivery of the outreach project was October/November 2021 with courses to commence in late November/December. However due to Covid-19 restrictions and outbreaks of the virus within some families, the outreach approach was delayed and courses did not commence until late January 2022.

Framework

Following several meetings an action plan was agreed under a Service Level Agreement model based on clear outcomes to meet the needs of the young adults and SICAP Requirements. The funding allocation of €8,000 allowed for additional staff hours to engage with the young adults through an outreach and mentoring approach. Given the relationship of Mincéirí Port Láirge

within the community we agreed this would break down initial barriers of mistrust, allow for them to identify relevant courses and enhance participation and attendance at those delivered. The key objective of the agreement was to strengthen participation of the Traveller Community in SICAP supports and programmes through Mincéirí Port Láirge outreach and mentoring support

Key outcomes from the meetings included –

- ✚ Shared learning on Traveller Community and how SICAP supports could be adapted to actively meet needs
- ✚ Promotion of existing SICAP training and education programmes
- ✚ SICAP tutors engaged based on previous experience of working with the community and awareness of cultural sensitivities including scheduling and barriers to participation.
- ✚ Young adults responded positively with the outreach and mentoring approach which encouraged participation
- ✚ Acknowledgement that participation of the community through normal promotion of SICAP and other agencies courses e.g. social media and websites does not always work for the Traveller community
- ✚ Providing additional funding to Mincéirí Port Láirge in delivery of programmes and actions positively impacts on a) the community, b) the project resources and c) organisations and agencies achieving their programme outcomes
- ✚ Other factors impacting on active participation including accommodation, ongoing Covid-19 pandemic and health guidelines, racism and discrimination experienced by the community on a daily basis
- ✚ Exploring options in delivering a community engagement pilot in Carrickpherish area
- ✚ How to assess additional needs and trends which emerge during the outreach work to inform future actions and planning for SICAP and WTIG

The Service Level Agreement outlined the role and responsibilities of both WAP and Mincéirí Port Láirge in financial management, targets, reporting, evaluating project etc. Including monthly meetings strengthened relationship between both organisations, enhanced learning and progression of the project, allowed for barriers to be acknowledged and where possible overcome through informed planning.

Project Delivery

The initial stage of the outreach project undertaken by Mincéirí Port Láirge staff to engage with young people and identify their needs took various forms of communication. Staff contacted young Traveller adults by various means including calls to Traveller sites, phone calls and by social media messaging to organise one-to-one meetings. Conversations raised many issues including fear of learning, challenges in literacy and IT skills, family commitments and would employment actually happen as a result of the course.

Several courses were identified which the young adults believed would give them additional skills to enhance employment opportunities with many very optimistic of change and new experiences. For the young men the focus was on the construction industry with Manual Handling and Safe Pass, with the young women it was Beauty Therapy and both agreed on Driving Theory course.

Liz Riches, SICAP Goal 2 Manager worked with her team in organising the courses and liaising with Mincéirí Port Láirge staff. We agreed at our meetings on trainers and using the newly acquired premises by Mincéirí Port Láirge as the venue. Timing of courses due to family commitments was considered with one exception in Safe Pass. Feedback from the young men asked for the course to

be held over two days and not the 8a.m. to 4p.m. time as stated. On this WAP had to state that this was a national certified programme that had to be held in one day and required at least 8 in attendance to proceed. It was also acknowledged that in applying for work in the industry all jobs started at 8a.m.

The following was agreed and outlined as targets within the Service Level Agreement

Specific training delivered for the Traveller Community in Manual Handling – 7 to participate



Specific training delivered for the Traveller Community in Safe Pass – 8 to participate in course

Specific training delivered for the Traveller Community in Beauty Therapy (pre-development) – 7 to 10 participate in course



Delivery of Driving Ambitions programme to achieve completion of the Driver Theory Test – 6 to participate.

We also recognised that the outreach project would support one-to-one mentoring and promotion of existing SICAP training and education programmes. Coaching and CV preparation was also discussed and would be provided for individuals if needed.

Mary Byrne, SICAP Employment Coordinator engaged trainers who had previous experience of delivering training to the Traveller Community, especially to address their concerns in participating and completing the course(s). The wrap around approach with the trainer and his support, the staff of Mincéirí Port Láirge and the venue being a safe place for the participants added to the person-centred ethos we were creating.

For the Beauty Therapy course one of the objectives was to break down barriers to attending an education centre. Previously Waterford College of Further Education (WCFE) had facilitated a mini course for young women so it was agreed to engage with them on this project. *Sue Larkin, SICAP Education Coordinator* worked with *Mincéirí Port Láirge staff* on exploring options with WCFE and arranged a meeting to discuss how best to proceed. Initial conversations were positive in that WCFE had a strong insight and understanding of the barriers attending their centre may create for the participants. However the costs associated with the 6-week course were beyond the available budgets within SICAP and Mincéirí Port Láirge.

The young women were encouraged to attend a Barista course as an interim measure while ongoing discussions are happening between Mincéirí Port Láirge and WCFE in the hope funding can be sourced for later this year.

Registration in line with SICAP Requirements with the participants was done in Mincéirí Port Láirge premises by *Mary Cowman, SICAP Administrator*. Mary had previously worked with the Traveller Community and understood concerns about sharing personal information, literacy etc. Due to Covid-19 health guidelines and the relatively low take up of vaccinations within the Traveller Community the registration process was adapted on individual basis.

To progress a community engagement pilot programme, initial discussions between *Catherine and Mincéirí Port Láirge staff* acknowledged the challenges of such an approach in Carrickphersish due to ongoing poor community relationships, lack of amenities and anti-social incidents in the general population of the area. The local library had organised a Parent & Toddler group for the Traveller Community which had seen successful outcomes including a reading programme. As these activities had been impacted by Covid-19 we identified the possibility of building on the work of the library and organise a coffee morning with the Traveller parents. It was hoped that this pre-development approach would lead to further meetings to identify a pilot programme in a safe space.

Project Outcomes

In WAP and Mincéirí Port Láirge reviewing the outreach project we acknowledged that this included positive and challenging outcomes for Traveller participation and progression and supported both organisations in meeting their objectives through the implementation of the framework.

Mincéirí Port Láirge provided a comprehensive final report which gave their insights, learning and individual stories to inform recommendations for future programmes and collaborative work. These are woven into this section and at times emphasised to highlight the impact of our approach.

In reporting on the courses and participation Mincéirí Port Láirge stated that ‘there has been an overwhelming response and interest to the proposed training programmes. Traveller men, who are usually hard to attract to structured courses, are showing a keen interest. The short one-day/block certified courses on topics needed for employment on building sites are proving to be the way to go and a learning for future plans’ – *Mincéirí Port Láirge, final progress report*. Other **successes highlighted** were

- ✚ Overall, 24 members of the Traveller community registered for courses with WAP including the pre-taster Beauty Therapy course which did not proceed (see below)
- ✚ So far approx. 15 people have undertaken training across 5 courses with a number of men having attended two courses

- ✚ There has been an overwhelming response and interest to the proposed training programmes. Traveller men, who are usually hard to attract to structured courses, have shown a keen interest. The short one-day certified courses on topics needed for employment on building sites are proving to be the way to go and a learning for future planning. How these are delivered need some more thought.
- ✚ Interest in the taster Beauty Therapy course was high with all places booked out.
- ✚ A small number of Travellers were helped with financial support towards additional costs of full-time WWETB courses e.g. Hairdressing and Sport & Fitness Level 5. Additional equipment costs for these courses are high and cost prohibitive.
- ✚ All who undertook courses enjoyed their experience and expressed great satisfaction with tutors and outcomes.

Certification and completion of courses by those who had registered:

- ✚ Safe Pass course by 3 men
- ✚ Manual Handling course by 7 men
- ✚ Driving Ambitions course by 4 young female adults
- ✚ Barista Course by 4 young women

Mary Byrne, SICAP Employment Coordinator stated that those who attended the training found it beneficial and feedback to the training was very positive with participants fully engaging in the course and skills development.

A number of **challenges** were encountered –

The **Safe Pass** course had to be postponed due to an issue for the trainer on the agreed date. This meant that it was a couple of months again before the course could run and only 5 men were available on the day and the course had to be cancelled as the minimum numbers needed for the course had not been reached. Since then several men have completed the course as they attended an alternative Safe Pass course. This approach will be the way forward as the Traveller specific course was difficult to fill on one given day.

SICAP incurred a cancellation charge on this course due to 5 of the registered 15 Traveller men attending on the day. The requirements under SOLAS are strict for this course and the training cannot proceed with fewer than 8 people so the training had to be cancelled. Within the framework this was discussed and how measures could be in place to mitigate against further risk regarding attendance with related administration costs put in place. As SICAP did not have another Safe Pass course planned 3 Traveller men accessed grants to participate on an external one.

The **Beauty Therapy Taster** course attracted a lot of interest. Initially the plan was to run this course over several sessions in Waterford College of Further Education. Then a One Day workshop in a private facility was looked at but was unsuitable as it did not meet the needs of the women. Approaches were again made to WCFE but the cost of €3,000 required by the college was prohibitive as neither WAP nor Mincéirí Port Láirge had this budget available. A similar taster course was run a number of years ago free of charge for participants coming through the then Ballybeg Community Development Project. It proved very successful and a number of the participants went on to train and qualify following the two-year course. Unfortunately, this was not possible this time which was a pity as an introduction to a college setting would have been very worthwhile. This was a disappointing outcome as the young women were so interested and believed that the course would give them employment options or progression unto another accredited course. It is hoped to run this course soon if funding comes available as several young Traveller women are interested in a career in beauty therapy or hairdressing.

Barista training was offered as an alternative to the young women with 4 attending and completing the training. This may open opportunities of employment in the hospitality sector who are in dire need of staff.

Five young women signed up for the **Driving Ambitions** and 4 completed the course. Doing this course online was particularly challenging due to IT literacy. The community has limited if no access to IT equipment and broadband with home environments not supportive of online learning. This form of learning will need additional resources for future participation on courses and was an ongoing issue for the community during Covid-19. Although Mincéirí Port Láirge accessed new laptops they were for those attending the Local Training Initiative.

Killian McGrath, **Southside Training and Consultancy** had been sub-contracted by WAP to deliver on the training due to his **previous experience of working with individuals and groups who experience marginalisation and disadvantage**. He provided feedback to WAP as follows.

Killian stated 'I feel that it's hard to get the message across when all in the group are of the same mindset, like especially with Health and Safety courses where I am trying to change that mindset but unfortunately with groups the learner's minds are often made up before the course begins. Also having everyone or too many in a class with the same ideology only leads to whatever message being taught has a tendency to be dismantled by likeminded individuals. Also with groups, tutors tend to find that everyone in the class is trying to 'best' one another and I also find that if the influencers in the group do not partake in the class, then peer pressure leads to others in the class not partaking.

From my 15 years of experience in training I find that learners tend to learn more from each other's experiences as they do from the tutors, which is why I often try to form groups and mix and match persons from different areas and backgrounds so they, the learners then see that there is an alternative other than what they have been given.

I believe that classes should be more integrated or the class size should be smaller where the message can be more concentrated when dealing with likeminded groups. This would also allow time for the tutor to deal with any influencers within the group.

Killian's feedback gave strong insights which, due to challenges with attendance on Safe Pass is now an agreed approach between Mincéirí Port Láirge and SICAP in offering places on existing courses.

In further discussions on the **framework** WAP and Mincéirí Port Láirge recognised it as a very positive approach and acknowledged it as a 'fresh start' in the working relationship between the two organisations which would be built on in the coming years. The open conversations at the start of the process allowed for each organisation to recognise limitation of resources and funding. The framework agreed, supported each of us to meet our programme objectives and annual plans.

At a WTIG meeting, *Mincéirí Port Láirge staff* referred to WAP's approach as a model of collaboration which each member organisation could adapt in achieving the objectives of the strategic plan and needs within the community. As a member organisation WAP will promote and propose similar approaches in the implementation of strategic actions to create stronger collaboration and outcomes for all. WAP stated at the meeting that the project had supported both organisations in achieving their annual plans however we have to recognise the limitations

on the current resources of Mincéirí Port Láirge especially staff. Implementation of actions will require additional funding for Mincéirí Port Láirge to engage in collaborative partnerships.

In reviewing the implementation of the **community engagement pilot programme** barriers emerged in the Carrickpherish area based on issues relating to accommodation at the Traveller Group Housing development. Due to the sensitivities of the circumstances it was agreed to defer this action at this time. It is noted that Carrickpherish has been highlighted by Waterford City & County Council as an area requiring a cross-sectoral collaborative approach which SICAP will engage with when initiated.

In reviewing the **framework** based on the outcomes above *Catherine and Liz* (SICAP Managers) referred to the Service Level Agreement which had outlined key outcomes as follows –

-  Structured approach to achieving actions identified by Mincéirí Port Láirge and SICAP
-  Traveller Community actively engaged in the development and delivery of agreed actions
-  Traveller Community specific training and education course delivered
-  SICAP Annual Plan 2022 informed by outcomes in strengthening links with Traveller Community and meeting identified needs
-  SICAP strengthens its links with Mincéirí Port Láirge and its role on Traveller Interagency Group
-  Final report to include overview of programmes delivered, additional needs identified, barriers to participation, testimonials and recommendations to inform SICAP planning and resources

There was agreement by both WAP and Mincéirí Port Láirge that the overall approach of the outreach project was very positive, outcomes had been achieved with key learning gained to inform future actions for both organisations.

Staff from Mincéirí Port Láirge stated that the engagement has been mutually respectful and there is an ongoing sharing of expertise which goes to providing a quality response to the training needs of the Traveller community. Where challenges are identified there has been a timely and solution focused response from WAP.

On behalf of WAP, *Catherine* acknowledged the positive engagement of Mincéirí Port Láirge in the development of the outreach project. The outcomes and learning will inform our future collaborations and annual plans which is critical for SICAP in engaging with our target groups. The outcomes outlined in this study have already impacted on how young Travellers participate in SICAP courses through integration with existing actions.

Progression for Participants

Progression for those who participate in SICAP programmes and courses is a key indicator within the programme. In reviewing the overall project staff from Mincéirí Port Láirge spoke with several of the participants to gain their insights on the training and where do they go from here. Their stories below highlight the positive feedback in participating on courses however the personal barriers each are experiencing reflects the frustration of trying to make changes with limited or no possible progression.

'Dave' is a young teenage male who was very happy to do the Manual Handling and Safe Pass course organised by WAP. He had initially approached one employer who had promised him work once training was completed. Once he had completed the training, he went back to the builder who refused him a job. He is still searching for work and believes his address and ethnicity could be a barrier. The young man lives on a Halting Site in Waterford city. His mother contacts Mincéirí Port Láirge regularly and says she does not want him surviving on a social welfare payment for the rest of his life. She wants 'a life for him where he earns his own money and can better himself'. The family are very frustrated that even with the courses completed and jobs available in the sector he still can't secure employment. This causes them to question the value of training at all if it's so difficult to get work.

'Sean' is a young man in his 30's who wants to take up training and employment. His family live in very insecure private accommodation in County Waterford. He has done the Manual Handling and Safe Pass courses organised by WAP. Whilst on the Safe Pass course he discussed further training for the construction industry with the trainer. He advised him of the Construction Skills Certification Scheme which encompasses a number of component courses to realise the full certificate. In following up on this advice 'Sean' contacted Mincéirí Port Láirge staff who undertook to find more information on the courses and refer him to the relevant trainers. On his behalf we made contact with Intreo Waterford, Intreo Dublin, the Construction Industry Federation and a Safe Pass trainer. All referred staff back to the Solas website with the drop-down menu. Having contacted a number of trainers on the menu and leaving messages, none replied and most were based far from Waterford, so not a practical solution. They all delivered different training modules so not very useful. The staff of Mincéirí Port Láirge know next to nothing about the construction industry and are not best placed to be advising on such training. The website is not user friendly and the man in question only has very basic IT skills. Despite many phone calls and a long internet search for information on courses none was found and the man is still unemployed and not in training at present despite his desire to do both.

'Avril' is a young woman who, following a long spell of homelessness and living in a refuge, finally found accommodation and was able to complete a number of modules on the Level 4 Local Training Initiative with Mincéirí Port Láirge. She then started and successfully completed a year-long Level 4 Hairdressing course. Following a very long search for a one day a week work placement, she eventually found a salon which gave her a work experience opportunity for the Level 4. This was with a Romanian hairdresser in Waterford city. The young woman believes that she gave her the work experience because she did not hold the usual prejudicial views many Irish nationals hold about Travellers. When 'Avril' successfully completed the course, she then applied for the new one-year apprenticeship in hairdressing to bring her up to the required industry standard. However she was unsuccessful at the interview as she had no registered employer for the block placement required for the new apprenticeship and there were very few places on the course. She was advised that there was little point in starting the 2-year course as Year 1 would just be a repeat of her level 4 topics. Following this news the young woman applied to a private college to start 2 stand-alone ITEC modules (employer-preferred qualifications in the industry by beauty, sport, fitness and therapy businesses globally) at a cost of €1700. Thanks to WAP, St. Vincent De Paul and an INTREO once off payment she has sourced the tuition money but must pay all her own equipment for the course at approx. cost of €450. As this is a huge struggle for her Mincéirí Port Láirge continues to try access this financial support.

'Avril' also completed the Barista course in the hope of picking up additional work to support her training costs.

'Jane' is a young woman in her 30's who has overcome numerous personal struggles. She now wishes to return to education and take part in the new Local Training Initiative being run by Mincéirí Port Láirge and funded by WWETB.

Unfortunately, the young woman had to leave the family home for safety reasons and is now homeless. She has had to postpone the start of her course as her emergency accommodation was withdrawn and she was told by Homeless Services to return to the family home or remain homeless. She eventually did this and hopes to return to the course soon.

Other **barriers** highlighted by Mincéirí Port Láirge that impact on progression for individuals include

- + Lack of **employers willing to take on young Travellers** for work experience as a stepping stone to employment, from school, PLC courses, apprenticeships etc.
- + There has to be follow on from **training to employment**. If this does not happen people become very frustrated and begin to question the benefits of training
- + Cultural challenges due to **generational unemployment** in families
- + Lack of **work and social networks** that could help Travellers find work experience and employment outside the Traveller economy
- + Lack of follow-on employment opportunities due to **perceived prejudice and racism**
- + **Access to information** on courses, particularly in the construction industry, very difficult to find
- + Every agency recommended we go back to the Solas website for information on Construction Skills Certification Scheme. To date **no response** from trainers within the drop-down menu for courses
- + Not enough **financial support** available for the **additional equipment costs** of Waterford College of Further Education and other private education courses e.g., Sports & Fitness & Hairdressing and Beauty
- + Having to **contact several agencies** for financial support
- + Having to use basic dole money to **pay for course equipment** with cost-of-living increases
- + Need for a **Math accredited QQI** Level 3/4/5 programme to prepare Travellers for **apprenticeship courses**
- + Shortage of **childcare places**

Aligning with Case Study Guidelines

Waterford Area Partnership SICAP Case Study on Traveller Outreach Project predominately lends itself to the theme of Engagement Strategies with SICAP Target Groups/Communities based on the key objective of strengthening our work with the Traveller Community. The project was enhanced though the positive collaborative work with the knowledge and experience of Mincéirí Port Láirge within a cross goal approach.

In addressing the mid-programmes priority areas outlined by Dept. of Rural & Community Development which included the Traveller Community this project and case study outlines SICAPs ongoing work. As a member of WTIG, WAP actively engages with key developments including co-funding the Strategic Plan and participating on working sub-groups. At all times our approach is to

work collaboratively with Mincéirí Port Láirge as the lead agency with their knowledge and expertise informing our actions. This ensures no duplication of work and adds value to the existing work of Mincéirí Port Láirge and other agencies.

The horizontal themes of SICAP were achieved through the project. The **collaborative approach** with Mincéirí Port Láirge informed all our decisions and progression of the outreach project through lively dialogue which enhanced our learning of the Traveller Community, their culture and the consistent barriers of racism, poor accommodation and health. It is important for our work to complement Mincéirí Port Láirge actions and for us to continue this approach. Current discussions include progression of their pilot programme for employment and strengthening of their community development work in West Waterford.

Community development theme is more challenging within SICAP actions and outcomes. Balancing a qualitative approach of pre-development work with a marginalised group and our KPIs can be opposing parallels. In Waterford we are very fortunate with having a Traveller Community Development Project in Mincéirí Port Láirge. However as they continue to advocate for change through local and national actions on issues such as accommodation, their staff and resources are overstretched. It is vital that WAP and other agencies provide wrap around supports both for the project and the Traveller Community which is hoped will be achieved through the actions outlined in WTIG Strategic Plan.

Through the outreach project Mincéirí Port Láirge staff reached out to young Traveller men and women to identify their needs and encourage participation on courses. Based on the uptake of courses it was predominately men who responded with fewer women engaging. Based on **equality** theme this may not be perceived as a positive outcome and we may need to recognise the cultural norms of young families and marriage as being the personal goal for many of the young women. In looking at the bigger picture it is predominately women who advocate on behalf of the community and engage with programmes such as Traveller Health Projects to affect change within their families. In the development of future plans and actions we can explore options to strengthen women's participation and address barriers including childcare. It is also Important to note that Mincéirí Port Láirge delivers a Local Training Initiative Level 4 Major 4 for women which may impact on engaging with WAP courses.

Reflections, Learning and Recommendations

WAP has woven our learning throughout the report with our regular meetings providing a vehicle for continued reflection and adapting of our approach. Mincéirí Port Láirge input into the case study was critical in providing us with their organisations and participants insights and has been highlighted throughout.

There is much for us to reflect on especially in addressing racism and discrimination to create innovative and positive progression for those we work with. The culture of the Traveller Community must be respected and we need to create safe spaces for open discussions based on mutual respect to affect change.

As stated at the start, this case study does not highlight anything new however, we hope that it will inform future collaborative actions with all stakeholders especially state agencies. WTIG, its strategic plan and partners have a responsibility to proactively implement changes at a local level. By working together much can be achieved as it is hoped that the work undertaken within this case study shows.

The way forward from the point of view of **Mincéirí Port Láirge** raised a concern as to the sustainability of the financial support which has enabled this work to happen. They expressed a fear that the support offered to date will not be available in future due to WAP/SICAP budget limitations.

Catherine and Liz (SICAP Managers) have committed to continuing regular meetings and to ensure Mincéirí Port Láirge has the opportunity to feed into our annual planning. It is recognised the limitation of SICAP resources due to the broad scale of target groups and disadvantaged areas we are responsible for implementing actions within. The knowledge and expertise of SICAP in policy development, grant applications, governance and strategic planning could bring additional supports and regular communication will determine what SICAP can provide.

Recommendations from Mincéirí Port Láirge

- ✚ Establishment of a bank of employers in private/public/social economy sectors willing to give members of the Traveller community work experience opportunities
- ✚ Establishment of the proposed pilot employment project designed by Mincéirí Port Láirge
- ✚ Establishment of a fund to support young Travellers in the additional costs associated with their courses e.g. sports, hairdressing and beauty therapy equipment and other costs
- ✚ As many young Travellers have left school at an early age the return to education/training and in gaining unemployment requires a dedicated education and training career guidance service
- ✚ WAP funding again be made available to Mincéirí Port Láirge to continue to dedicate staff time to outreach and support Travellers into WAP courses and services. This is currently done on a limited basis due to shortage of staff hours as WAP funding has dried up
- ✚ More childcare places be made available to support all programmes

Recommendations from SICAP

- ✚ Sustainable collaboration to ensure consistent resources and responses to needs identified within the Traveller Community and WTIG Strategic Plan
- ✚ Ongoing communication with Mincéirí Port Láirge to inform annual planning based on cultural sensitivities and identified needs
- ✚ Review annual budgets to implement agreed actions with Mincéirí Port Láirge. This is reliant on other priorities
- ✚ To advocate for meaningful change especially on anti-racism and discrimination

Final words from Mincéirí Port Láirge

The issues that run through all of the case studies from the young people are

- A myriad of different sources and agencies needs to be navigated to access small amounts of funding towards high additional costs for courses
- Need for a dedicated fund to help people with hidden costs. No Traveller on a welfare payment should be prevented from doing a course due to relatively low additional costs associated with the course
- Information on construction industry courses not available in any one place. This could be easily remedied
- Easier access to work experience opportunities for Travellers
- Insecure accommodation and homelessness impact greatly on take up of courses. Decent accommodation is a determinant of education for many