



**PAVEE POINT**  
TRAVELLERS CENTRE

# Traveller Drug Network

## Workshop Report

Pavee Point Drugs Programme

2011

## Context

The Traveller Drug Network (TDN) was established in 2005 and originally consisted only of Traveller organisations that were dealing with the issue of drug mis-use in their local areas. In 2010, the network was extended to include drug and alcohol support services from around Ireland so information could be shared between services in order to meet service users' needs effectively. The network provides an opportunity for Traveller organisations to make connections with these support services so the issue of substance mis-use can be addressed in a collaborative nature.

The second Traveller Drug Network of 2011 focused on the area of sexuality and the impact this can have on physical, mental and emotional well-being. Research has shown that LGBT young people can experience marginalisation, fear, isolation, bullying, harassment, family and peer rejection, which can then lead to them being more vulnerable to drug & alcohol use. Pavee Point Drugs Programme would like to acknowledge the inputs from BeLonG To's Gillian Brien, Fionnula Spillane of Gay Pavees Forum and John McCarty. We thank them most sincerely for their contributions<sup>1</sup>.

## Overview

This report consolidates the feedback from each of the workshops following BeLonG To's presentation on LGBT young people and the Gay Pavee Forum. Future actions to be considered by the Traveller Drug Network to progress the issues raised will also be put forward.

Seven questions were asked of each group with key points from the discussions being recorded. For brevity reasons, the responses have been themed in order of frequency<sup>2</sup>.

The seven questions examined were:

- 1.1- Do you feel LGBT Travellers are supported enough by services and the Traveller community? How?
  - 1.2 – What challenges do LGBT Travellers face when coming out?
  - 1.3 – What positive changes would you like to see happen so that LGBT Travellers feel supported?
  - 1.4 - Do you know any LGBT Travellers? How many? How many do you think there are?
  - 1.5 - Why do you think being gay is different for Travellers compared with settled people?
  - 1.6 – How can LGBT Pavees Forum support Travellers who are gay?
  - 1.7 – What could make it easier for LGBT Travellers to disclose their sexuality to your service?
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## 1.1 Do you feel LGBT Travellers are supported enough by services and the Traveller community? How?

The vast majority of services that participated in the workshops felt that LGBT Travellers are not supported enough by services and the Traveller community. It was felt the issue was still very 'new' and not enough information and education was being disseminated in relation to supporting LGBT Travellers.

### Themed Responses

#### *Traveller Community*

- Travellers reluctant to be seen using LGBT services
- Seen to bring shame on the family
- Family will not accept it
- In some cases would rather see children dead than LGBT
- Fear of repercussions from coming out
- Threats to family
- Wouldn't want other Travellers to know about their sexuality
- Fear of being judged
- Self Acceptance
- LGBT Travellers face double discrimination
- LGBT Travellers not supported enough by Traveller Community

#### *Services*

- Suspect that LGBT services are not inclusive of Traveller community
- Suspect that Travellers have a poor awareness of available services
- Traveller organizations are not addressing the issue of LGBT Travellers other issues come first.
- Efforts need to be shown that services are Traveller friendly.
- Traveller literature should be displayed in LGBT Services and Traveller organizations should display LGBT literature.
- Cultural Awareness training may benefit LGBT service providers

#### *Going Forward*

- Education and information for Travellers on the issue is important
- Supports available should be made visible in schools and youth services
- Generational barriers are prevalent
- Acceptance in Traveller community required
- More outreach work could be done by LGBT services and Traveller organizations.
- Possible role for PHC workers
- Traveller counseling service could be a source of reaching young and old Travellers
- Values will not change overnight – time working progress
- It will take time for LGBT work to develop within Traveller community
- Things are changing but with something new it takes time

## 1.2 – What challenges do LGBT Travellers face when coming out?

This question identified the challenges for LGBT Travellers when disclosing their sexuality. The question highlighted possible areas of work for LGBT services and Traveller organisations to support LGBT Travellers coming out.

### Themed Responses

- Fear of Violence
- Stigma
- Shame/Guilt
- Isolation
- Pressure to conform
- Having to prepare for the possibility of rejection
- Paranoia inside families of Traveller communities
- Fear of the impact on families
- Fear of how one will be treated after disclosing sexuality
- Emphasis on marriage
- Lack of LGBT Traveller role models
- Labelling of people who are accepting of or supportive of LGBT Travellers
- Religious disapproval
- Minority within a minority
- Possibility of rejection from LGBT community due to being a Traveller
- LGBT services need to be more visible so Travellers know where to go for support

### 1.3 – What positive changes would you like to see happen so that LGBT Travellers feel supported?

There was a wide variety of responses to this question with the most common response involving education, promoting awareness and more discussion on the issue. The provision of practical supports from services and the development of LGBT programmes within Traveller organisations in relation to this issue were also noted.

### Themed Responses

- More discussion needs to take place
- Raise awareness on the issue
- National Traveller Forum/committees and national events need to have LGBT on their agendas
- A Traveller specific LGBT programme be established within a Traveller organisation
- Role models
- Department of Education dictate school programmes
- Remove religion from schools to allow more sexual health programmes and an integrated approach to LGBT issues
- Religious leaders need to have more tolerance, compassion and be non judgmental
- Need to start to change traditional beliefs and attitudes
- Media promotion e.g. Belong To's Stand up ad campaign

### 1.4 – Do you know any LGBT Travellers? How many? How many do you think there are?

Out of the 5 groups with approx 8 participants each, here are the estimates and findings of how many LGBT Travellers there are.

- Few LGBT Travellers are known but not many are out
- Estimate 1% of the Traveller community are LGBT, potentially around 400
- 36 LGBT Travellers in total were known in one group – felt between 5-10% of the Traveller community would be LGBT
- Yes, LGBT Travellers are known but many will not disclose their sexuality

- In Dundalk a female Traveller was open about her sexuality and she is getting support from her family
- Do not know any have only heard rumours
- Believe there are many LGBT Travellers but are too afraid to disclose their sexuality
- Estimate 3,500 LGBT Travellers

#### 1.5 – Why do you think being gay is different for Travellers compared with settled people?

- Traveller Culture
- Denial
- Expectation of Marriage
- Lack of LGBT role models
- Close community and family brings about a lack of confidentiality
- Higher level of unacceptance
- Stigma
- Religious Beliefs
- Violence
- Cultural Norms
- Loss of Identity, family, friendships and home
- Psychological pain
- Homophobic Behaviour
- Myths

#### 1.6 - How can LGBT Pavees forum support Travellers who are gay?

- Continue to do what they are doing
- Put up supports around suicide
- National organizations get involved
- Get people involved with professional qualifications
- Closely monitor – safety is vital
- Literacy is a huge barrier
- Make the forum for young people
- Peer support important
- Only place for LGBT Travellers to talk
- Could be dangerous
- Service information section on the forum
- Networking with other organization
- Target youth groups
- Raise awareness of the site
- Website needs to be checked more regularly
- What is the criteria for membership
- What are the websites policies
- Continue to provide a space for shared experiences

#### 1.7 – What would make it easier for LGBT Travellers to disclose their sexuality to your service?

- Provide more information sessions
- Promotional material
- Ensure staff are competent in dealing with LGBT issues
- Staff training on Traveller culture
- Friendly environment

- Confidentiality
- Visual posters
- Multi disciplinary approach
- Build trust
- Services being inclusive
- People want to be accepted, acknowledged and feel heard

### Future Actions for Consideration

Based on the responses collated from the workshops, Pavee Point Drugs Programme endeavours to liaise with relevant services to ensure that steps to address the highlighted areas are put in place. Updates on action taken will be posted on our website at regular intervals.

Key agencies that are working to support LGBT Travellers:

- BeLonG To
- Pavee Point Travellers Centre
- LGBT Pavee Forum

