



# COUNTY KILDARE TRAVELLER AND ROMA INCLUSION STRATEGY CASE STUDY



The Social Inclusion Community Activation Programme (SICAP) 2018-2022 is co-funded by the Government of Ireland and the European Social Fund as part of the ESF Programme for Employability, Inclusion and Learning 2014-2020.

## COUNTY KILDARE TRAVELLER AND ROMA INCLUSION STRATEGY

### INTRODUCTION

Kildare is the first county in Ireland to develop an Inclusion Strategy for Traveller and Roma people and its development was led by Kildare Local Community Development Committee (LCDC).

Funding for the development of the Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy was made available by Kildare County Council and by County Kildare LEADER Partnership under the Social Inclusion Community Activation Programme (SICAP).

The development of a Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy was a key action in the SICAP 2018 – 2022 Plan for County Kildare under Goal 1 Supporting Communities. Within this plan the development of the strategy was included under the thematic area of Collaborative Engagement.

**SICAP** is the national social inclusion programme focused on the most marginalised in Irish society. It aims to tackle poverty and social exclusion through community development approaches, local engagement and partnership between disadvantaged individuals, community organisations and public sector agencies. County Kildare LEADER Partnership is the designated Programme Implementer for SICAP in Kildare. SICAP 2018 – 2022 provides funding to tackle poverty and social exclusion through local engagement and partnerships between disadvantaged individuals, community organisations and public sector agencies.

### BACKGROUND & CONTEXT

The Equal Status Act (2000) defines Travellers as a community of people who are identified both by themselves and others as having a shared history, culture and traditions, including a nomadic way of life on the island of Ireland. Irish Travellers are a people with a separate identity, culture and history, although they are as fully Irish as the majority population. In March 2017, Travellers were officially recognised as an ethnic minority in Ireland. Recent research has found that Travellers stand out as a group that experiences extreme disadvantage in terms of employment, housing and health, and that faces exceptionally strong levels of prejudice. According to the 2016 Census, the total number of Travellers residing in Kildare was 739 and represents 0.3% of the total population. This rate is lower than the State average (0.7%), EMRA (0.6%) and the Eastern SPA average of 0.5%.

The establishment of Traveller Inter-Agency Groups (TIG) in each local authority area with a Traveller population followed recommendations of the 2006 Report of the High-Level Group on Traveller Issues. The overall purpose of TIGs was to improve Traveller access to services and to provide more integrated service delivery to achieve it. County Kildare Traveller Inter-Agency Steering Group was formed in January 2007 to promote a coordinated and integrated approach between agencies, Travellers and Traveller organisations to improve equality of outcome for Travellers in areas such as education, training, employment/self-employment and in access to a range of services and opportunities. The group went into abeyance in 2009.



In May 2015, the Department of Justice & Equality Annual TIG Conference Report *“Traveller Interagency Process: The Way Forward”* recommendations proposed that TIG’s be established in all local authority areas. Kildare Traveller & Roma Inter-Agency Group (CKTRIG) commenced relationship building with members of the Roma community in 2015, under SICAP, in response to growing awareness of the barriers that people were experiencing. Ongoing SICAP supports to Travellers in collaboration with Kildare Traveller Action highlighted the need for a targeted inter-agency response to the needs of both communities. Parallel to this, following significant consultation and engagement with Traveller and Roma people, the National Traveller and Roma Inclusion strategy 2017 – 2021 was launched.

County Kildare LEADER Partnership (CKLP) included a proposal for a Traveller Inter Agency Strategy in its 2017 Annual Plan for SICAP (Social Inclusion & Community Activation Programme) and also commenced predevelopment work around an inter-agency response to the needs of the Roma Community in County Kildare. The development of a Traveller Roma Inclusion Strategy was a key action included under Goal 1 in the SICAP 2018 – 2022 Plan for County Kildare. In October 2017, CKLP also submitted a proposal to Kildare Local Development Committee (LCDC) to sponsor and lead the development of a Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy for Kildare. A significant aspect of the proposal included the involvement of state agencies at a senior management level and provision for representation of the Traveller and Roma Communities. Kildare Traveller Action Ltd was engaged to assist in mobilising the representation of the Traveller Community and Pavee Point Traveller & Roma Centre was engaged to assist in the mobilising the Roma Community.

Roma people have a long history of living in Europe with a presence recorded from the 13th Century. The term 'Roma' is believed to be first chosen at the inaugural World Romani Congress held in London in 1971. This term is now widely accepted across the European Union (EU) to describe a diverse range of communities, tribes and clans. The Roma community in Ireland face a range of challenges, particularly in relation to racism and discrimination. They experience exceptionally challenging issues when seeking to access Social Welfare supports due to the Habitual Residency Condition (HRC) and difficulties accessing Social Housing Support due to residency requirements and changes in local housing policies. In developing this inclusion strategy in County Kildare, considerable engagement with Roma communities has enabled us to estimate, anecdotally, a population of Roma living in Kildare to be in the region of 500 – 600.



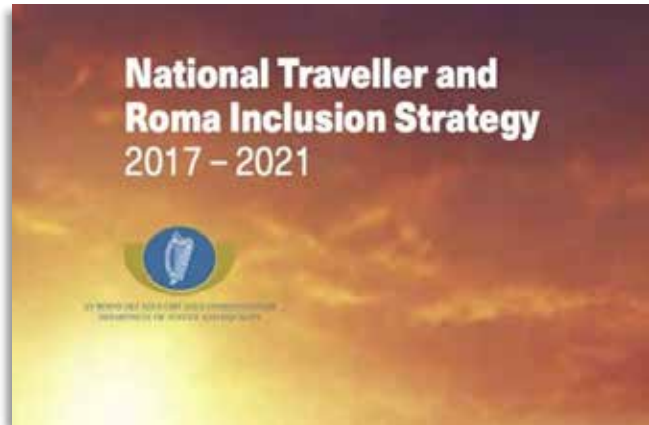
**Roma Young Men’s Consultation  
Newbridge**

It was envisaged that in order to successfully support Traveller and Roma participation in the process funding for two Community Development Workers for a six-month period would be required. SICAP funding enabled County Kildare LEADER Partnership to convene the Inter-Agency Steering Group, the engagement of S3Solutions as consultants and two Outreach Community Development Workers who would facilitate engagement with Traveller and Roma communities. Kildare LCDC agreed to lead the development of the Strategy and the collaborative approach was further strengthened by the commitment of Kildare

County Council to co fund the employment of the Outreach Workers and the engagement of the consultants.

## OBJECTIVE OF COUNTY KILDARE'S INCLUSION STRATEGY

The development of Ireland's **National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy** involved an assessment of existing structures in place for engaging with and delivering positive outcomes for Traveller and Roma communities across Ireland. After engagement with NGOs, Traveller and Roma communities, and other interested parties/individuals, the 2017 strategy promoted a change of emphasis away from integration and towards inclusion. Each of the themes are supported by high level objectives and actions.



The National strategy offered a framework and guide for the development of the counterpart strategy in County Kildare. In understanding and acknowledging the barriers to inclusion for marginalised groups in County Kildare, the County Kildare Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy development process was underpinned by a set of guiding principles including:

- Traveller and Roma people should play a lead role in the development of the strategy, thus the process should be underpinned by participatory consultation
- The success of any strategy will rely on interagency partnership working, therefore statutory, community and voluntary service providers should contribute to the process alongside Traveller and Roma people
- The strategy should focus on achieving outcomes, those outcomes should be informed by Traveller and Roma people

## THE PROCESS

One of the core principles of SICAP is collaboration and the ability of the programme to work with other stakeholders. Both the Local Community Development Committee (LCDC) and SICAP recognised from the outset that meaningful change for and with Traveller and Roma communities would only happen through a multi-agency, partnership-based approach. While the previous inter-agency working group had done a lot of good work in the area of inclusion with members of the Traveller community there had not been a strong enough emphasis on the implementation of actions by all of the agencies involved. All of the members of the current Inter-Agency Steering Group were in agreement with SICAP's approach and from

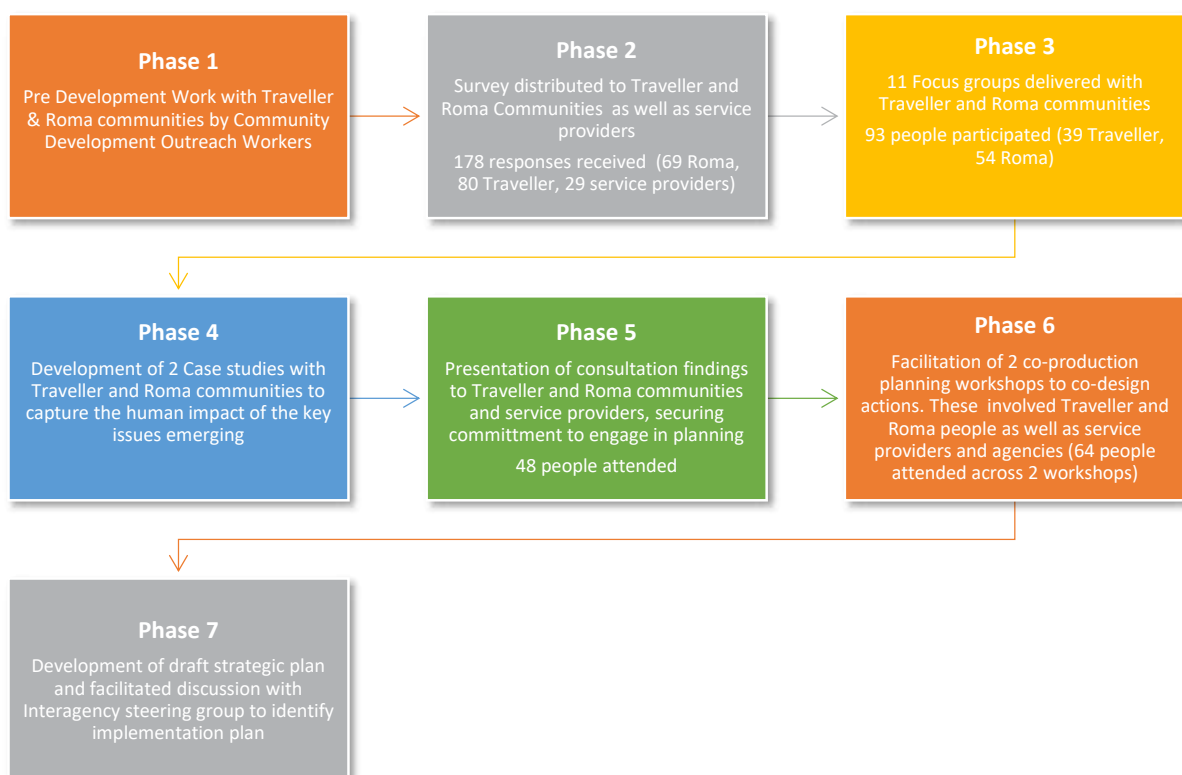
### The membership of the Inter-Agency Steering Group involved representatives from:

Kildare LCDC (Chair), Kildare County Council, County Kildare LEADER Partnership, Kildare Traveller Action (KTA), Pavee Point Traveller & Roma Centre, Citizens Information Service, DEASP, Kildare Wicklow Education & Training Board (KWETB), An Garda Síochana, Kildare County Childcare Committee, TUSLA, National Education & Welfare Board, HSE and CYPSC.

the very beginning SICAP reported that the steering group participated willingly and worked collaboratively throughout the process.

The two Outreach Community Development Workers who were appointed in May 2018, were tasked with engaging with Traveller and Roma individuals, families and communities as well as liaising with front line staff employed by service providers. This process was designed to lead to an enhanced level of engagement with Traveller and Roma communities across County Kildare. This was important in terms of establishing relationships and building trust as a precursor to a participatory led consultation process. S3 Solutions, who were also appointed by CKLP in May 2018, facilitated the consultation with Traveller and Roma communities, liaised with the interagency steering group, facilitated outcomes focused planning and developed the final strategy document.

S3 Solutions worked closely with County Kildare LEADER Partnership and inter agency groups to refine the strategy development process. The aim was to ensure maximum participation and buy-in from the Traveller and Roma communities across County Kildare, ensuring that they had the opportunity to shape the strategy through a participatory and community development process. In order for any consultation process to be successful and for the consultants and Outreach workers to have meaningful engagement with the community they had to know and understand the culture of the people that they were trying to engage with. The Consultants and Outreach workers went out to people’s homes, in the evenings, at weekends and met with people in small groups over a cup at tea, at their kitchen table. It was also important that all those involved realised that members of the Traveller Communities had been asked to engage in these types of processes before but never truly witnessed solid actions or meaningful changes at the end of the process. Therefore, it was important to not only get the process right but to get buy-in from the members of the community. The consultation process for the Roma Community also required a level of understanding, innovation and sensitivity as this was probably the first time for some of the Roma Community to be even asked their opinion, never mind become involved in a consultation process at this level.



**FINDINGS:**

During the development of this strategy, it became apparent that there was limited community infrastructure in County Kildare to support the Traveller community and no community infrastructure in place to support the Roma community. In order to gain a deeper understanding of the emerging issues, focus groups were facilitated with members of the Traveller and Roma communities, as well as

**TRAVELLER COMMUNITY**

**1. DISCRIMINATION**

*It was clear that there was a strong sense of exclusion and discrimination amongst the participants. Traveller's being denied access to pubs and restaurants, there is substantial reference to Travellers being followed around shops and supermarkets by security guards.*

**2. HOUSING - 2 Key Issues**

- **Lack of Housing** - face further exclusion in terms of literacy and understanding of the processes involved
- **Lack of Culturally Appropriate Housing** – Some feel that the current housing that is being offered does not support a Traveller Culture which can be problematic as what is available may not be Traveller specific accommodation.

**3. EMPLOYMENT**

*There was substantial reference to the issue of employment, or lack of employment opportunities for Traveller people.*

**4. HEALTH & EDUCATION**

*Whilst participants clearly recognised education and health as important strategic issues, challenges of housing and discrimination were more short term and urgent, potentially reflecting a hierarchy of needs.*

**ROMA COMMUNITY**

**1. HOUSING & ACCOMMODATION**

*Feedback resoundingly identified this as their number one priority. Lack of Housing and suitable accommodation is having a huge impact on the community. Specifically, in relation to **Security of Tenure** – Short term evictions are usually successful due to a lack of knowledge among Roma of their rights and entitlements as tenants, as well as not knowing where they can get information and advocacy. The Roma people who took part in the consultation provided numerous real-life examples of how the Housing/Accommodation issue impacted upon them. The disconnect and misunderstanding of rights and entitlements is causing housing stress for many Roma Families and is an area of concern in the context of this strategy.*

**2. EMPLOYMENT**

*Access to employment is a major challenge for Roma people. Those consulted appear to reference employment as the catalyst or impetus for addressing other issues such as housing, poverty and poor health*

**3. POVERTY**

*The consultation process with Roma people identified that many Roma families are living in poverty*

**4. DISCRIMINATION, FACILITIES & RESOURCES, CULTURAL DIVERSITY**

*These 3 themes emerged as cross cutting themes during the consultation process.*

consultation with service providers through web-based surveys and interviews. Clear trends emerged in relation to thematic priorities for both Traveller and Roma people.

### Service Providers Key Findings:

The consultation process also included engagement with key statutory, voluntary and community-based stakeholders. This process involved a web-based survey that reached out to over 200 service providers and yielded 30 responses.

<i>Do you believe that Traveller and Roma people were fully included as equal citizens in Kildare?</i>	Service Providers	Traveller	Roma
<b>Agreed/ Strongly Agreed</b>	17%	10%	6%
<b>Neither Agree nor Disagree</b>	33%	8%	6%
<b>Disagree/ Strongly Disagree</b>	50%	83%	88 %

The feedback appears to suggest a disconnect between the views of service providers and the communities themselves. Between 30 – 40% more Traveller and Roma people disagree or strongly disagree that they are fully included as equals than the service providers.

A third of the service providers neither agreed nor disagreed. This shows that there is significant gap in relation to the reality/ perception of inclusion between the Traveller and Roma communities in Kildare and those who are providing services to them.

This element of the consultation process helped to contextualise the emerging findings i.e. Linking the Roma challenges relating to poverty/accommodation to the Habitual Residency issue or emphasising the need to include Health and education as thematic priorities.

### IMPLEMENTATION

The final Strategy offers an ambitious series of actions across agreed strategic priorities that, collectively, will lead to delivery of positive outcomes for the Traveller and Roma community. Whilst the implementation strategy will be driven by the Interagency Steering group, it is wholly dependent on the cooperation and collaboration of all agencies that interact with, engage with and provide services for Traveller and Roma people and access to additional resources. In order to ensure that the Strategy delivers practical and real change for the people whom it represents.



Inter-Agency workshop Oct 2018

**The Key Implementation Arrangements are as follows:**

- ✓ SICAP will convene targeting small working groups to review the revised action plan, this will involve identifying a lead agency for each action along with suggested support organisations. This process will also involve making an initial approach to the named agency to ensure that they will accept responsibility for leading on that particular action.
- ✓ The interagency steering group will oversee the implementation of the Strategy
- ✓ SICAP will appoint a Coordinator to oversee the implementation of the Kildare Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy co funded by Kildare County Council
- ✓ SICAP will work with Kildare County Council to secure resources to enable overall community development for staff to be employed for both Traveller & Roma communities. These roles are seen as pivotal in driving the remainder of the strategy.
- ✓ The Strategy should be subject to annual review, this should involve consultation with Traveller and Roma people to review the progress against the stated outcomes/indicators.
- ✓ The new Roma Employment Programme funded by the Department of Justice has commenced and will be a key element of the implementation of this strategy.
- ✓ The Strategy identified major gaps in relation to Kildare's basic community infrastructure, particularly for the Roma community. Specific Actions have been identified in the short term to address this:
  - The establishment of a Roma Support Organisation in County Kildare.
  - The securing of core funding to Kildare Traveller Action
  - Explore the broadening of the scope of Kildare Traveller Action (KTA) to become Kildare Traveller and Roma Action (KTRA)

## **THE ROLE OF SICAP & SUPPORTS PROVIDED**

From the outset CKLP was very clear that the consultation process and the development of the strategy had to include and involve members of the Traveller and Roma communities throughout the whole of the process. By having the support of SICAP funding the steering group were in a position to hire an external consultant and two Outreach Workers to work out in the communities at grassroot level.

A key element of the collaborative approach described in this case study is the relationship with Kildare County Council who have co funded the development of the strategy and also the outreach workers who have engaged with the Traveller and Roma communities. This relationship between SICAP and Kildare County Council has been developed over successive social inclusion programmes and has included collaboration with the resettlement of refugees in Naas and the development of the Kildare Integration Strategy 2014 – 2019 which is also co funded by the local authority.





SICAP worked very closely with Kildare Traveller Action and with Pavee Point which not only enhanced their working relationship but also demonstrated to both communities that all three organisations were willing to work together in order to support people to be heard during the consultation process and have an input into the final strategy. KTA is a community development organisation which aims to promote equality and human rights for Travellers in County Kildare. During the pre-consultation stage of the process SICAP made the decision to allow for the secondment of one of the Outreach Workers to Kildare Traveller Action Group Ltd., which provided the opportunity to work more closely with the community. They were able to spend time working with the community, getting know and understand what life was like for people from the Traveller Community across Kildare.



Similarly, SICAP worked very closely with Pavee Point Traveller & Roma Centre in order to begin dialogue with members of the ROMA communities, prior to this, there had been little to no meaningful consultation with this group in the county. Pavee Point is a national non-governmental organisation comprised of Travellers, Roma and members of the majority population working in partnership at national, regional, local and international levels. Similar to the work within the Traveller Community, the appointment of an Outreach Worker to go out into communities and get to know people at the local level had a significant and positive impact on the consultation process. The Roma Outreach Worker is a member of the Roma Community and therefore already had positive connections with the Roma community in the County. This proved invaluable to the process as members of the Roma communities were a lot more willing to open up and inform the Consultants on the realities that they are facing in Kildare.



According to S3 Solutions, without the appointment of both of these outreach workers and the collaboration with Kildare Traveller Action and Pavee Point the consultation process would not have worked as successfully as it did.

One of the core principles of SICAP is collaboration and the ability of the programme to work with other stakeholders. County Kildare LEADER Partnership has taken the lead on ensuring all key stakeholders were not only working collaboratively throughout the development stage of the strategy, but they will also support the Inter-Agency Steering Group to oversee the actual implementation of the strategy going forward. S3 Solutions believe that this is going to be crucial if the strategy is to succeed and true and meaningful engagement is going to occur with the Traveller and Roma Communities across the county.

## LEARNING

SICAP and the LCDC have been working in consultation with the members of the Traveller community for a long period of time and their positive working relationship with Kildare Traveller Action (KTA) was of real benefit to the success of the consultation process with people from the Traveller community. Throughout the whole of the project KTA were consulted with and included. This included being involved in the recruitment of the Outreach Worker, being part of the inter-agency steering group and being involved in the consultation process. KTA believe that by SICAP leading the project in partnership with Kildare County Council there was a lot of positivity towards the project as it demonstrated that everyone involved was serious about including members of the Traveller and Roma community in the future of the county.



**Traveller Focus Group Athy**

Another key to the success of this project was the decision to second one of the Outreach workers to KTA to work alongside the Primary Health Care Team. The outreach worker shadowed the Primary Health Care Team on their visits and meetings over a two-month period prior to asking people to either complete a survey or become involved in the strategy. She attended health information meetings, met with people in their women's group and accompanied some of the community to their swimming lessons. The outreach worker reported that by the time it came to her passing around the surveys the community knew who she was and the work that she was trying to achieve. Even communities that she had never met before were more willing to engage with her because they had heard of her. The Outreach Worker stated that she felt very privileged to have been welcomed so openly by members of the Traveller Community into their meetings and discussions.

The ability and freedom to be innovative, think outside the box and be willing to go out to each community was key to the success of this project. SICAP and the inter-agency steering group gave both of the Outreach Workers and the Consultants the freedom to try new and innovative methods for consultation and not rely on the use of large focus groups in hotels and public offices to try and attract people into the process.

The pre-consultation development work with both the Traveller and Roma Communities was another key to the success of the project. S3 Solutions went out with the Outreach Workers and relevant support agencies to meet with people in order to get their opinion on how the consultation process should be done. Members of the inter-agency steering group reported that this demonstrated a willingness to talk to people and get to know what life is like for people from the Traveller and Roma communities in Kildare.

It became very obvious to SICAP and S3 Solutions from very early on in the process that there are very little supports for members of the Roma Community. By introducing the Outreach Worker SICAP was able to establish contact with individuals and families to understand the issues the Roma Community are dealing with on a daily basis. SICAP now has a baseline to work from and is in a stronger position moving forward to work with this community in order to support them.



**Roma Focus Group Newbridge**

Overall, the majority of the steering group reported that the process was positive, and everyone came to the table willing to work together collaboratively which often does not occur. Agencies such as the Citizens Information Service reported that they have been working with both of these communities for a long period and were becoming frustrated with the continuous barriers that people were facing. This was especially the case with the Roma Community, who face some of the biggest institutional barriers when they do not have a home and cannot access the social welfare system. At least now all of the agencies are aware of these barriers and processes can be put in place to try and support these people going forward.

Getting buy in from the inter-agencies was essential for the development of the strategy and for its implementation of the action plans going forward. The Steering Group’s determination to not sign off on the Strategy until all stakeholders had agreed on the action plan ensured that there was buy in from all involved. Unfortunately, this did delay the launch of the strategy and some of the groups and agencies involved felt as a result that the process was a bit drawn out. Everyone understood why the delays occurred but some of the momentum has been lost in the intervening months.

Members of the Roma communities would have liked to have had more buy in from the agencies at the consultation process. Some felt that more of the agencies should have come to talk to them to hear about the issues that they are experiencing on a day to day basis. Roma people face a significant number of institutional barriers which prevent them from being able to access services in Kildare. According to the Citizens Information Service, until now there was no formal mechanism for agencies to come together to work towards solving these problems and often agencies were unaware of the problems as they were only concerned with the areas that they held responsibility for.

### **LOOKING TO THE FUTURE**

When speaking with all of the groups about what will happen now the key word response has been “Hope”. All of the groups and agencies involved are very hopeful that what has been put in the action plan will happen and that work will commence immediately. Members of the Traveller Communities have been involved in a lot of consultation process over the years and KTA reports that their members are confident that this time it will be different and the meaningful engagement that they have witnessed so far will continue into the future.



**Roma focus group Newbridge Town Hall**



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