



14/07/2025

Deputy Sorca Clarke,
Dáil Éireann,
Leinster House,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2.

PQ 35984/25

Dear Deputy Clarke,

The Health Service Executive (HSE) has been requested to reply directly to you in the context of the above PQ 35984/25, which you submitted to the Minister for Health for response.

The National Traveller Health Implementation Group (NTHIG) monitors implementation of the 45 actions contained in the National Traveller Health Action Plan 2022-2027 (NTHAP). These actions are set out in the plan's four goals and nine strategic objectives. There are also 429 actions in the seven CHO/Traveller Health Plans that have been developed as part of NTHAP implementation.

Goal 1 of NTHAP sets out to 'Strengthen the governance, monitoring and structures to support implementation of NTHAP'. This goal has 3 strategic objectives and 12 actions. Outcomes measures for Goal 1 include mechanisms in place to support implementation of NTHAP, increased accountability mechanisms including financial accountability, improved participation of Travellers in decision-making and progress on inclusion of an Ethnic Identifier into health data systems on a phased and prioritised basis.

To date NTHIG has put in place tracking and accountability mechanisms in terms of the establishment of NTHIG and its sub-structures. Each CHO also developed CHO/THU Traveller Health Implementation Plans. NTHIG has supported the development of mechanisms for the reporting and tracking of actions, production of NTHAP annual reports, and has convened stakeholder meetings. Traveller Health Units have increased representation of public health staff in line with planned actions. NTHIG has also established an Ethnic Equality Monitoring and Data Sub-Group. This group has been gathering information on HSE data systems to prioritise and identify key systems in which to introduce an Ethnic



Identifier. The sub-group is working with key HSE personnel to put mechanisms in place to commence this process. An assessment of Goal 1 implementation at this mid-term point in the plan is that most actions are on track. Outstanding work includes the development of a set of Traveller health indicators and the full implementation of Section 42 of IHREC report. These actions will be worked on during the second half of the lifetime of the plan.

Goal 2 of NTHAP sets out to 'Improve Traveller's equality of access, participation and outcomes in mainstream health services through a human-rights based approach'. This goal has 2 strategic objectives and 9 actions. Outcome measures for this goal include Traveller proofing of HSE policies, plans and actions, partnership working between HSE and Traveller Health networks to reduce high levels of communicable diseases amongst Travellers, increased engagement of Travellers in HSE mainstream services and identification of Traveller health needs to inform service planning and responses.

There has been good progress on Goal 2 actions. NTHIG allocated once-off funding to support the development of a Traveller a proofing toolkit aimed at supporting and enabling Traveller inclusion in mainstream health services. This is currently in development and will be available in 2025. Funding was also allocated to support the standardisation of Traveller Cultural Awareness Training/anti-racism training for staff in HSE services, with the aim of enhancing HSE Services capacity to support Traveller access and participation. The Framework is due to be completed in September 2025. Primary Healthcare for Traveller Projects continue to deliver TCAT/anti-racism training to personnel in the HSE with 22 Traveller organisations/PHCTPs delivering to HSE services nationally in the last year.

A project to support the mapping of Traveller health assets and Traveller populations is also in development and will provide HSE mainstream services with information to better plan and support Traveller inclusion. At a Regional and national level HSE mainstream services are working with PHCTPs and have co-produced the following: Traveller culturally appropriate health education and health promotion resources, immunisation resources, cancer prevention materials, information on screening services and sign posting to addiction services as well as supporting men's health through a variety of Men's health programmes. In the second half of the NTHAP implementation period, it is expected that the Traveller proofing toolkit will be available in use in health services and the health asset/population mapping will be in place to support service planning for Traveller inclusion.



A mid-point assessment of Goal 2 actions highlights significant joint work between the HSE and PHCTPs in key health services.

Goal 3 of NTHAP sets to 'Address the social determinants of Traveller health through targeted and mainstreaming measures. This Goal has 2 strategic objectives and 17 actions that cover a range of activities including actions focused on mental health, education, young Travellers, Traveller men older Travellers, disabled Travellers, Travellers in addiction as well as work by HSE Public health working in partnership with local authorities to address social determinants of health. Outcomes measures for this goal include increased support for Travellers accessing addiction services, increased access to services for older Travellers, Young Travellers, Traveller men, and provision of culturally safe mental health and suicide supports.

HSE Regions report a wide variety of activities in the implementation of Goal 3 actions including supports for a range of education programmes, development of mental health crisis response plans, men's health programmes, programmes to support young Travellers, work to support Travellers who are homeless/at risk of homelessness, engagement of PHCTPs with Drug Task Forces and signposting to Drug and Alcohol Task Forces.

An assessment of this goal is that many areas have made very good progress on implementation of planned actions, however, in a number of areas the absence of Traveller health unit coordinators and mental health coordinators has delayed or slowed progress on some actions listed in the local action plans.

Goal 4 of NTHAP sets out to enhance Travellers' access to culturally appropriate primary health care through investment in Traveller Health Units and Primary Health Care for Travellers Projects. There are two strategic objectives and 7 actions listed in this plan. Outcome measures include a stronger and more effective Traveller health infrastructure, improved partnerships, increased access to PHCTPs and nationally consistent approach across Traveller health units.

There has been good progress on these actions with the majority of funding available allocated to support implementation of this goal. Three new Primary Healthcare for Traveller Projects (PHCTPs) have been established in Mayo, East Limerick and Drogheda, Co Louth. In addition, funding has been



allocated to PHCTPs nationally to employ 21 Full time equivalent Traveller Community Health Workers, 7 of which have a focus on mental health. Currently there are two reviews underway to be completed in 2025, including a Review of Primary Healthcare for Traveller Projects and a separate review of Traveller Health Units, these reviews will support and inform the strengthening of projects and structures.

An assessment of this goal is that good progress has been made to date on with the second phase of implementation focusing on continued development of these structures as the cornerstone of implementation of NTHAP.

Independent mid-term review

The National Traveller Health Implementation Group has contracted IFIC- The International Foundation for Integrated Care to conduct an independent mid-term review of NTHAP implementation. This review will inform and support the remaining implementation of NTHAP.

I trust this information is of assistance to you.

Yours sincerely,

Aisling Heffernan

Integrated Healthcare Area Manager, HSE Dublin South and Wicklow

Chair of the HSE National Traveller Health Implementation Group