



National Traveller Health Action Plan Newsletter | Third edition



An update from the Chair of NTHIG

Welcome to the third edition of the National Traveller Health Action Plan newsletter. It has been a busy six months for those involved in implementation of the NTHAP with a number of reviews underway and projects in development.

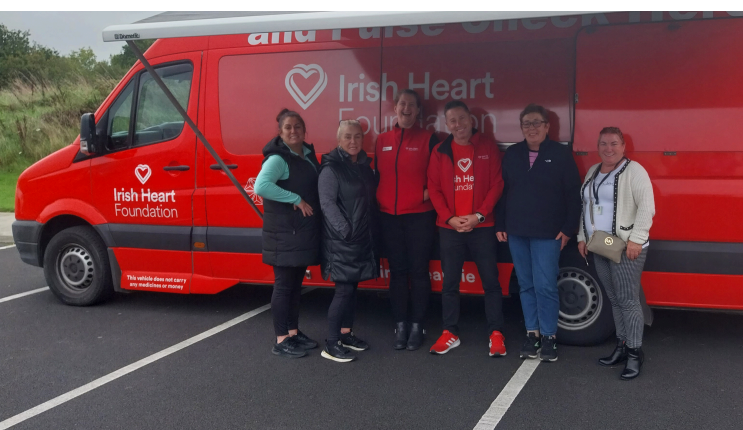
We are currently mid-way through the delivery of the NTHAP and are taking the opportunity to reflect on progress to date, aiming to capture learning to apply in the next phase.

In May, in line with the plan's commitment to ongoing stakeholder engagement, we held a Reflections on Implementation event with representatives from all regions in attendance. Each area presented on implementation progress and highlighted key implementation issues, enablers and challenges. NTHIG will take on board this feedback, which will inform our current and future work plans and programmes.

One issue often raised by those working within Traveller health structures is the importance of building the capacity of our health services to actively support Traveller access and participation. This includes understanding and responding to Traveller health needs and building staff and service capacity through Traveller proofing of services and training. This newsletter signposts to available trainings that can support HSE staff in this regard. It also features some of our current and new programmes. For more information on Traveller health, the contact details for NTHAP staff can be found on the back page of this newsletter.

Kindest regards,

Aisling Heffernan, Chair of the National Traveller Health Implementation Group



In this issue...

PHCTP Review

Reflections on Implementation Event

Traveller Cultural Awareness Training
Framework

NTHAP Midterm Review

Traveller Brighter Beginnings Initiative

New PHCTP in Drogheda

Reflections on Implementation...



The National Traveller Health Implementation Group (NTHIG) organised an event in May for NTHAP stakeholders. Partnership working and collaboration between stakeholders are key principles underpinning the Plan, and NTHIG has made a commitment to regular stakeholder engagement. The event provided an opportunity to reflect on NTHAP mid-way through implementation, and for implementers to share learning and engage with the National Group.

Attendees at the event included members of NTHIG, Traveller Health Unit Coordinators, Social Inclusion Managers, staff from Primary Healthcare for Travellers Projects, Traveller organisations, and some Public Health colleagues from the HSC Public Health Agency (Northern Ireland). Each Traveller Health Unit area presented an update on implementation, highlighting key enablers and barriers to implementation, and outlined what they would like NTHIG to consider in supporting delivery during the remaining period of the Plan.

While challenges varied by region, some common issues were raised. These included difficulties with recruiting and retaining staff, reliance on once-off funding, and a lack of funding for administrative support. On the other hand, consistent involvement from Traveller organisations and Primary Healthcare for Travellers Projects (PHCTPs), along with positive engagement from Public Health teams, were important enablers.

NTHIG has made a commitment to continued stakeholder engagement and will consider the themes emerging from the event to inform the next phase of implementation.



Barriers

- HSE vacancies in Traveller health posts.
- Recruitment & retention of staff in PHCTPs
- Underdeveloped Traveller health infrastructure in some areas
- Urgent mental health needs of Traveller community
- Administrative demands
- Large workloads and competing demands in PHCTPs
- Multiple reporting processes for NTHAP funding
- Rural/Accessing Traveller families in Rural locations
- HSE vacancies and recruitment embargo



Enablers

- NTHAP provides regional framework
- Funding - range of once-off and recurring
- Existing Traveller partnerships, structures and relationships
- Existing partnerships with key agencies, e.g. Tusla
- Regional and local Traveller networks
- Strong independent Traveller organisations hosting PHCTPs
- Approaches to implementation - community development & social determinants of Traveller health
- Public health nursing supports
- Availability of TCAT
- Local mental health networks developing tailor-made responses

March NTHIG Meeting



The National Traveller Health Implementation Group convened in March and May, with Chair Aisling Heffernan leading discussions on key updates including, progress on implementation of NTHAP actions. A central focus of these meetings is to ensure NTHIG is up to date on NTHAP progress and is aware of and responding to key issues impacting implementation. Recently NTHIG discussed internal communication structures and updated the Terms of Reference (ToR) to reflect the evolving structure of the working groups and ongoing projects. Sinead Finucane, Acting Head of HR in the South East Region and Linda Horan from National Primary Care Finance, have joined NTHIG in 2025.

NTHAP Midterm Review

The National Traveller Health Action Plan (NTHAP) includes a commitment to undertake the midterm review, which is now underway. IFIC, the International Foundation for Integrated Care, has been contracted to conduct the review and will engage with NTHAP stakeholders to review implementation to date and identify learnings to inform the next implementation phase.

The review commenced in April and will be completed by the end of September. Over the next six months, IFIC will work closely with an operational group made up of representatives from the National Traveller Health Implementation Group (NTHIG) and other important Traveller health organisations.



The review process will incorporate input from stakeholders at national, regional, and local levels, with IFIC reporting its findings at the October meeting. At this point in the review, IFIC is asking action leads named on Traveller health regional/local plans to complete an online survey during August.

The following [HSEland](#) training modules and online information are available to support staff in gaining an understanding of Traveller health needs and may be useful to you when planning your services.



Introduction to Ethnic Data Collection: 30 mins

Introduction to Traveller Health: 45 mins

Diversity Equality and inclusion- 3 modules

- Module 1: Introduction: 30 mins
- Module 2: Inclusive communication at work: 45 mins
- Module 3: Working in a diverse team: 45 mins



Click here for an introductory webinar
on [Ethnic Equality Monitoring](#)



New PHCTP in Drogheda



Primary Healthcare for Traveller Projects play a key role in implementing the National Traveller Health Action Plan. NTHAP funding has supported the launch of a new project in Drogheda, hosted by Louth Local Development Company. Throughout the past year, efforts have focused on engaging the Traveller community, providing training and development for members of the community to work in the project, and recruit

the project coordinator. The project officially got underway when the new coordinator started in the role in January 2025. Since then, there's been great progress in getting the right team in place.

Working closely with the PHCTP teams in Navan and Balbriggan, the Drogheda project has focused on recruiting Traveller Community Health Workers (TCHWs) and getting the operations off the ground. This included Traveller Cultural Awareness Training/Anti-Racism Training (TCAT) for staff at Louth Local Development, with support from the Balbriggan PHCTP team. Connections have also been made with national Traveller organisations working in the area of health, including Pavee Point. These links are helping to shape the development of the project in line with the National Traveller Health Action Plan.



The recruitment of Traveller Community Health Workers began in February, with the new coordinator providing one-to-one support to candidates, focusing on applying for roles and interview preparation. Five CHWs were successfully recruited and started in their roles in May.

New staff are now being supported through an induction phase, undertaking a range of training including:

Manual Handling

Children First (HSE)

Let's Talk About Suicide (NOSP)

First aid

Dignity & respect in the workplace

Healthy Food Made Easy (Ongoing – HSE)

IT Skills Development

Youth Mental Health First Aid

Boundary awareness

Heart Health & Diabetes Awareness



This marks an important step forward in improving health services and supports for the Traveller community in Drogheda. We look forward to sharing more updates as the project continues to grow.

Primary Health Care for Travellers Project Review (PHCTPS)



The PHCTPs are essential partnership projects between Travellers and the HSE, facilitating culturally appropriate communication and increasing levels of trust between them. Located in Traveller and other section 39 organisations, they provide the basic infrastructure for the roll out of the actions in the National Traveller Health Action plan (NTHAP) to address Traveller Health inequalities. The PHCTPs employ trained Traveller Community Health workers (TCHWs) to improve access to health services through providing culturally appropriate information and signposting.

They also advocate and support Travellers to address the social determinants of their health including racism, accommodation, education and employment.

In support of the continued development of PHCTPs and in line with the National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy II, the National Traveller Health Implementation Group is facilitating a review of these projects. A PHCTP Review Oversight Group was established and is Chaired by Diarmuid O'Donovan, Director of National Health Improvement with HSE Public Health, members include a wider variety of stakeholders including HSE and Traveller representatives. It is expected that the review will be completed by the end of Q3/start of Q4 this year.

Traveller Cultural Awareness Training/Anti-Racism Training (TCAT)



NTHAP funding is supporting a project to develop a National Framework for Standardised TCAT/Anti-racism Training. This work is in line with Action 18 of the National Traveller Health Action Plan (NTHAP), as well as the National Traveller & Roma Inclusion Strategy.

Staff from the Cork/Kerry Traveller Health Unit and Cork TCAT are leading this initiative. They are working in partnership with Traveller organisations and Primary Healthcare for Traveller Projects involved in TCAT delivery to agree on shared principles and standardised content. This approach aims to bring greater clarity and consistency, offering valuable support to organisations and trainers delivering TCAT.

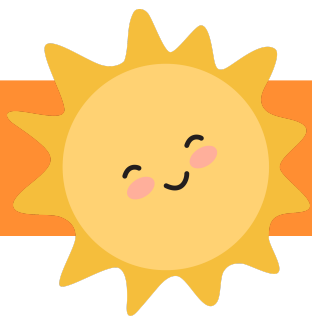


The project has two phases. Phase 1 involved an intensive scoping exercise to establish a baseline for TCAT delivery nationally, with the development of an agreed framework making up Phase 2.

The organising committee recently held two national meetings (in person and online) and presented the Draft Framework for standard TCAT training for delivery to health service providers.

The sessions were collaborative and provided ample space for group discussion and feedback.

Feedback from the groups highlighted the importance of resourcing TCAT going forward. Participants also emphasised the need for the training to be adaptable and reflect the fact that culture is always changing. There was recognition of racism and the challenges that trainers may face when delivering TCAT, along with a strong call for Traveller voices to lead the training itself.



Traveller Brighter Beginnings Initiative



In support of implementation of Goal 2 of the National Traveller Health Action Plan, the Department of Health has provided funding for the Traveller Brighter Beginnings Initiative. This initiative aims to develop a model of good practice in providing healthcare services to improve equality of access, participation and health outcomes for Traveller children.

The National Traveller Health Implementation Group and the National Healthy Childhood Programme joined with key NTHAP stakeholders to develop the programme. Funding has been allocated to Dublin and the South East Region and the HSE West and North West to develop two pilots, which will initially run over three years with an opportunity for continued funding.

Brighter Beginnings supports Goal 2 of the National Traveller Health Action Plan 2022-2027, which states:

Improve Traveller's equality of access, participation and outcomes in mainstream health services through a human rights-based approach.

These pilots will see the development of pathways and direct supports for Traveller children and their families for engaging with mainstream health services. It will also support Traveller inclusion in HSE mainstream children's services through promoting Traveller proofing and the building of Traveller cultural competency. The initiative will build on existing Traveller and child health partnerships and practices at local and regional levels to identify and address barriers to access and participation for Traveller children and their parents in HSE services, using a social determinants of health and community development approach. The pilots will take both a targeted and mainstreaming approach by:

- Supporting Traveller proofing of services and ensuring they are culturally appropriate and accessible for Traveller children and families.
- Improving service responses across the social determinants of health to improve Traveller children's health outcomes.
- Supporting community health literacy for Traveller families and developing appropriate signposting .
- Ensuring the voices of Traveller families are included throughout the pilot project.
- Supporting a strong evidence base within children health services to ensure that the needs of Travellers are included.



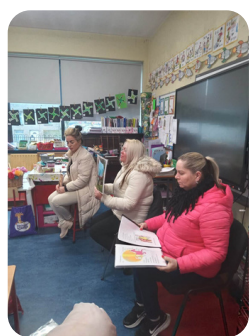
National Traveller Health Advisory Forum News – Understanding work of the Primary Healthcare for Traveller Projects – Activity Data



The National Traveller Health Advisory Forum (NTHAF) provides national coordination and support for Traveller health planning, delivery and monitoring. It comprises representatives from Traveller Health Units, Primary Healthcare for Traveller Projects and National Traveller organisations. As part of its work, it is seeking to develop a core activity data set to provide a national picture of the activities of Primary Healthcare for Traveller Projects.

Recently as a precursor of this work, and in support of business cases to resource the PHCTPs, NTHAF compiled a 'Summary of Key Activities of Primary Healthcare Projects for Travellers (PHCTPs) 2024' report. This report gives a national flavour of the key activities reported in 2024 by PHCTPs via Traveller Health Units, highlighting strategic achievements and ongoing efforts to promote culturally appropriate health provision and reduce Traveller health inequalities.

PHCTPs document their work (qualitatively and quantitatively) on an annual and ongoing basis as part of funding arrangements with the HSE. However, there is a need to ensure greater visibility of the range and depth of this work as currently reporting structures are inconsistent. As a result, NTHAF is committed to publishing an annual activities report and supporting the development of an agreed national reporting template for PHCTP data.



National Social Inclusion Office Resources & Support on Ethnic Data Collection

The National Social Inclusion Office (NSIO) are carrying out a programme of work to develop and support Ethnic Data Collection within a range of health services.

[What is Ethnicity and Ethnic Data Collection?](#)

[Legal requirements and actions in strategies](#)

[Posters in various languages](#)

[Webinar-Introduction to Ethnic Equality Monitoring or Ethnic Data Collection](#)

[Translated ethnic data collection categories](#)

[For more information, click here](#)



Social Determinants of Traveller Health

Video developed by Southern Traveller Health Network & University College Cork

[Click here!](#)



Useful acronyms for Traveller health:

EEM	Ethnic Equality Monitoring involves the systematic and regular collection of data on the ethnic composition of a population, including disaggregation by gender, to identify and address inequalities. It helps ensure equal access to and outcomes from public services for all ethnic groups by monitoring the impact of policies and practices on different groups
EI	Ethnic Identifier is a method of classifying individuals based on their ethnic background, typically involving identifying a shared cultural, religious, or racial heritage. It is used to collect data about the diverse populations within a specific region or context, like education systems or healthcare services.
Ethnicity	is a measure of a close cultural connection as opposed to race, nationality or citizenship. It involves sharing background characteristics such as a shared history, common ancestry, geographical origin, language culture and religion
NTHAF	National Traveller Health Advisory Forum provides national coordination and support for Traveller health planning, delivery and monitoring. The Forum generally meets every 6 weeks and comprises HSE staff, Traveller Health Unit (THU) Coordinators, a Traveller organisation/PHCP representative from each THU, and representatives from national Traveller organisations. Concepta de Brun chairs NTHAF, and it has 4 seats on NTHIG.
NTHAP	National Traveller Health Action Plan 2022-2027
NTHIG	National Traveller Health Implementation Group
PHCTP	Primary Healthcare for Travellers Projects
TCAT	Traveller Cultural Awareness Training
TCHW	Traveller Community Health workers, working in Primary Healthcare for Travellers Projects
THU	Traveller Health Units operate at CHO level and are a partnership between the HSE and local Traveller organisations/Primary Healthcare for Traveller Projects. They support the development of Traveller-specific services, either directly by the HSE or indirectly through appropriate voluntary organisations. Traveller Health Units lead out on the development of CHO Traveller Health Implementation plans and play a key role in leading out on implementation and monitoring of these plans at local level.

For more information on the NTHAF newsletter, please contact:

Michelle Kearns, michelle.kearns2@hse.ie

Brigid Quirke, brigid.quirke@hse.ie

Monica Rzepka, monica.rzepka@hse.ie