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The Traveller Youth Service has been in operation since 2004 and staff and management felt it was important to evaluate current programmes and procedures to enable us to further improve and build on the existing service.

We engaged the services of Clarity: Research, Development and Training Ltd. to evaluate the service. We would like to acknowledge the excellent work undertaken by Mary Hogan and Catherine Morley, who made the process so engaging for all involved.

We would also like to thank Dun Laoghaire VEC (Aisling Crowley and Zuleika Daly-Jamieson) for their support and encouragement and the VEC for funding this important piece of work.

Without naming everyone, we would finally like to thank all persons who were involved in inputting information to our evaluation including: Youths, Parents and staff from the community, members of the Youth Advisory Committee and STAG Management Committee and staff.

We trust this report will be a vital tool for us to progress the Traveller Youth Service further.

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## Acknowledgements

A process of the type with which we engaged for the development of this report is one which requires significant support from a number of key players. In the first instance, we must acknowledge the support of Alison Corr, Geraldine Dunne and all the team who made us feel welcome and who supported the process from beginning to end.

We must also acknowledge all those who participated in the review process parents, staff, STAG management committee, advisory group members and those parents we visited on sites around South County Dublin. At all stages of the process, our team was afforded guidance, support and copious amounts of hot tea!

Young people played a pivotal role in the process, their comments, humour and energy (!) will remain with us long after the report is forgotten. The cover of the report has been designed using the artwork of the TYS young people and the title of the report *It's the Bestest* is a direct quote from one of the young people. Of course, we could also have called the report *They fill our hearts with joy* - but that might have been considered over the top!

The report is the combination of the efforts of those named (and not named) above and the work of the Clarity team assembled for the process, which comprised:

Catherine Morley	Executive Director
Mary Hogan	Projects Manager
Petronella Canty	Project Administration

We trust our report reflects accurately the hopes, fears and challenges named by all of those involved in the process.

Go raibh maith agaibh go leir

*Catherine Morley*

Executive Director – Clarity: Research, Development and Training Ltd.

(March 2009)



## 1 Opening Remarks

- 1.1 In order to accurately reflect the achievements and challenges of the Southside Travellers Action Group (STAG) Traveller Youth Service (TYS) since its establishment in early 2004, the Clarity team posed a series of very straightforward questions to a cross section of key stakeholders over a two month period between January and March 2009. Essentially, we developed an external review process which sought to build a strengths based picture of the service as it is currently constituted. These questions were focused upon requesting participants to reflect upon the particular programmes provided by the TYS; the types of structures – operational and strategic – in place to support the delivery of the service; the impact of the service upon the young people, their families and the community as a whole and the gaps in that service. In our view, the role of the review team is not to attempt to *fix things that are not broken*, but rather to support participants to have meaningful, focused conversations which can then be used to formulate practical recommendations which can be used to inform the development of a particular organisation, service, project or initiative.
- 1.2 Our report of the process is structured relatively straightforwardly and takes as its starting point the cultural context within which the service is operating and the hopes, fears and challenges faced by the TYS in sustaining that culture, whilst also attempting to support young people at a period in their lives which is immensely challenging. When, perhaps, the relatively ordinary issues facing teenagers emerge and then combine with experiences of the particular types of exclusion experienced purely as a result of being a member of the Traveller community. Clarity works with some of the most marginalised communities of interest and geography in Ireland and, thus, we were always mindful of the footprint the process would leave behind and the impact that our annotation of those reflections could, potentially, have on the development, energy and momentum of the service moving forward.
- 1.3 With all of this in mind, we present this report within the following framework. Section 2 – **Overview of the Process** – provides an overview of the key elements of the review process and the strengths based model within which it was framed. Sections 3, 4, 5 and 6 provide a detailed analysis of the inputs from the various stakeholders and focus on programmes, structures, impact and key findings in relation to programmes, structures and impact. Section 7 – **Recommendations Moving Forward** – puts forward an analysis of the a series of recommendations emerging from our analysis of the key findings which are designed to build upon the work of the service to date and support the development of the service moving forward. **Appendix 1** provides background and operational information on STAG and the TYS.
- 1.4 In the final analysis, the implementation of an external review hopes and strives to provide a series of lenses through which to view a particular service / programme / initiative at a particular stage in its development and to provide a baseline upon which to review in the future. Thus, we put this report forward as a series of snapshots, taken at a particular period of time and within a particular service and support landscape. Our hope is that this report is, above all, useful to TYS and STAG in building upon their considerable achievements to date and in taking on the significant challenges which a developing and growing service may, potentially, face within the current economic environment.



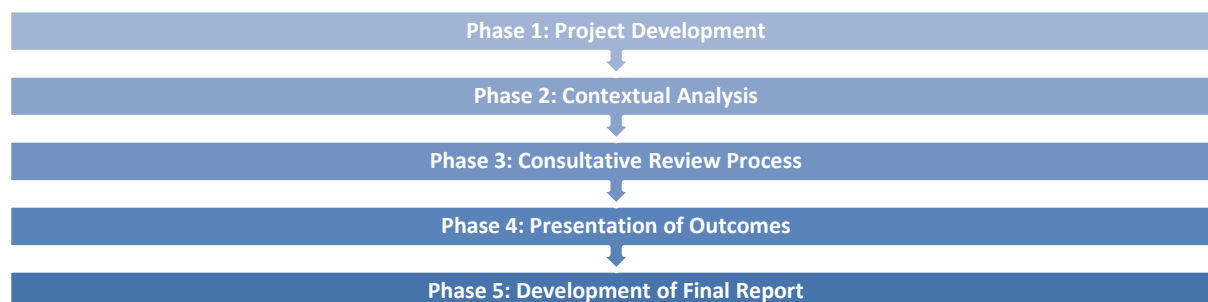
## 2 Overview of the Review Process

### 2.1 Opening Remarks

2.1.1 The purpose of this section of the document is to provide an overview of the review process put in place for the development of this document. Below, we provide an overview of the process and implementation plan, the agreed review framework, the key questions posed within the process and the levels of participation in the process. In developing the particular model, we were mindful of the restraints on resources which the process would encounter and ensuring that the best use was made of the relatively limited time within which we had to complete the review. Thus, we implemented the review using a 360<sup>0</sup> review framework, and concentrated on working with participants within a series of scheduled focus group sessions.

### 2.2 Process and Implementation Plan

2.2.1 In the initial stages of the development of the process, we put forward and agreed a process plan. In our view, the management of expectations and clarifications at the outset of the roles and responsibilities of particular stakeholders are key to the successful completion of review processes. The diagram below provides an overview of the agreed process plan:



2.2.2 Following on from agreement of this process plan, an implementation plan was agreed, with specifically identified targets relating to the number of specific Clarity days by which the review team and the TYS could summatively assess progress.

Activity	Description	No. of Days
Contextual Analysis / Project Development	Analysis of available data on work of TYS to date – aims, objectives, progress reports, work plans etc	0.5
Site Visits	Series of visits to the locations around Dun Laoighaire / Rathdown	1
Focus Groups with young people (6)	A series of interactive events to facilitate young people to voice their views, concerns and opinions around TYS provision	3.5
Parents' Focus Groups (2)	2 separate focus groups – one for mothers and one for fathers <sup>1</sup>	1
Staff / Volunteers / Tutors Focus Group (1)	1 focus group specifically for staff, volunteers and tutors	0.5
Youth Advisory Group Focus Group	1 focus group – to include funders	0.5
Profiling of participating young people	Development and analysis of data set relating to young people participating in the service – age, gender, home place, school attended etc.	1
Development of Review Report	Presentation of outcomes of review process	1
	Drafting of review report	2

<sup>1</sup> Unfortunately, the father's focus group did not materialise as envisaged, but a number of men met with the team separately.



## 2.3 The Review Framework

2.3.1 As stated at the outset, the framework agreed for the implementation of the review process sought to operate within a *strengths based* model, that is, it sought to afford opportunities for those most significantly engaged with the service to not only identify the challenges faced by the service, but also to identify the achievements of the service to date. To this end, a **360<sup>o</sup>** framework was agreed from the outset. This framework afforded all participants – young people, parents, staff, management and advisory group – to explore the same themes within a facilitated session, where issues where perhaps unforeseen issues could emerge in a respectful, safe environment and where the team would then explore, as the need arose, the particular emerging issues in more detail with the group.



2.3.2 Of course, in addition to this, through the site visits, informal discussions with community members not participating in the particular focus group sessions were also facilitated. It is important to note that within this framework, the resources were not available to engage with current or potential youth service partner organisations within the county, although, given that the advisory group comprises representatives from various agencies responsible for the delivery of generic youth services within the geographical area covered by TYS, this was not considered to be a significant challenge to the process.

## 2.4 Key Issues Addressed within the Review Sessions

2.4.1 Building on the SWOCH (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Challenges and Highlights) model, each participant group – including the significant number of young people participating in the process – were asked to explore the following:

- The TYS programme
- The structures in place (both operational and strategic) to deliver the programme
- The impact of the service – on the young people, their families and the community
- The *gaps* in the current service and how they might be addressed moving forward

## 2.5 Participation in the Process

2.5.1 Participation in the process was significant, with young people (ranging in age from eight to fourteen) being particularly well represented (40)<sup>2</sup>. The parents' focus group comprised thirteen mothers (3 fathers met with the team separately). All of the staff and volunteers participated, as did the entire STAG Management Committee. Three members of the Advisory Group participated in the process, with an additional two having an opportunity to input into the discussion relating to the findings.

## 2.6 Closing Remarks

2.6.1 Essentially, the process aimed to afford as many stakeholders in the use, delivery and management of the TYS an opportunity to reflect on the service and to put forward their views as to how the service might develop moving forward. On final estimation, over seventy people (aged from eight to – *we're too polite to assume*) participated in the discussions which form the basis of sections 4, 5, 6 and 7, below.

<sup>2</sup> Clarity is not a youthwork organisation, and therefore, we have not been able to participate in *Garda Vetting* procedures, however, throughout our work with young people, we work closely with our clients to ensure that we operate within the *Children First* guidelines in terms of our engagement with young people. In addition, a key element of discussions on our site visits was ensuring that parental consent for young people's participation in the process was assured.



### 3 Reflections on the TYS Programme

#### 3.1 Opening Remarks

3.1.1 The purpose of this section is to provide an overview of the outcomes of the consultative review process in relation to the programme.

3.1.2 As stated in section 2, above, the 360° review model facilitates the establishment of the varying levels of the work of a particular organisation, whilst attempting to ensure that each participating group has the opportunity to reflect on similar issues or themes. Below, we have attempted to move from the practical responses provided by the young people themselves, where they told us what they liked and disliked about the programme, their views on the staff and the sorts of programmes they would like to see in the future to the reflections of parents, staff, management and advisory group on the key challenges facing the delivery of a high quality youth service within an extensive geographical area with young people for whom provision has to maintain a balance between issues such as cultural appropriateness, resource effectiveness, development education and an opportunity to escape from what are often very difficult living conditions. Clearly, at all levels, the programme overall elicited a significantly positive level of response, challenges exist however, as we name below, and also in the sections relating to structures, impact and gaps.

#### 3.2 Young People

3.2.1 As indicated in Appendix 1, below, the TYS provides a broad, activities based programme on a rotational basis to young people living on the eleven halting sites, the group housing schemes, settled accommodation and roadsides. Staff of the service collect young people from their home places and bring them to the centre or other centres to participate in weekly programme activities which include:

- Horse riding, stable management
- Computers
- Media skills
- Cookery
- Art activities
- Handball
- Dance classes
- Summer Programmes / Day Trips
- Christmas events
- Open nights

3.2.2 In addition, TYS also provides specific programmes such as *Video man*, a project within which young people created, performed in and recorded their own DVD. In addition, staff provide individual one to one support to young people and their families experiencing particular difficulties in relation to education, peer relationships and drugs for example. In any one week, the service can work with up to seventy young people.

3.2.3 Clearly, for the young people, the key thing they wanted us to know was that they loved the programme, were very happy with it and wanted *more*. From their perspective, the activities are excellent, with particularly favourable responses being put forward in relation to horse riding, which was by far the favourite for both boys and girls. Speaking of the six week horse riding and stable management programme with visible excitement, one young person said “*I love horses*”, and his friend, nodding in agreement said “*He does, and so do I*”. Next on the list for young people, again



for boys and girls, was having access to the internet<sup>3</sup>, to games and to social networking sites like *Bebo* and *You Tube* and internet based gaming and art programmes such as *Line Art*. The Summer Programme and Day Trips were also greatly endorsed by the young people, one of whom said *I love going on the day trips, it's good to get off the site for a while*". Interestingly, the cookery course was also singled out for praise. For girls, the dance classes are very popular, with one young girl even telling us that she wants to *learn to dance like her Mammy does at home*. Projects such as *Video man* were also highly praised by the young people.

3.2.2.2 When speaking of the Summer Programme – particularly the day trips – *Clara Lara* was brilliant, again, the young people were overwhelmingly positive. A couple, however, who had been to *Clara Lara* a number of times felt that they would like to go somewhere else and a group of boys – who had obviously got into trouble on an overnight stay – started to tell us about the impact of the actions of a few (one of whom was present!) on the fact that this activity within the Summer Programme had ceased. For others, performing at the Christmas Event – which is attended by young people and their parents – was a particular highlight. While for others, being selected for the handball team and winning matches elicited significant levels of back slapping and general camaraderie.

3.2.2.3 The TYS runs a weekly open night, which encourages and facilitates new young people to participate in a semi- structured *youth club type* event. Essentially, young people felt that this gives them an opportunity to make new friends and get to know the TYS team. The open night is facilitated by 2 staff members, one of whom is a licensed community bus driver. This was identified by young people as very positive as otherwise they would not have an opportunity to participate in the TYS, as one young person said *"this was the first time I came here, it was great"*.

### 3.3 Parents

3.3.1 For these young people's parents, the programme was seen as providing a number of opportunities. On one level, some felt it gave the young people a chance to relax and try things they might not otherwise have an opportunity to try, reflecting thoughts of the boy who felt it gave him a chance to *get away from the site for a while*. On the other, parents felt that the activities, particularly the horse riding, were excellent. In addition, clearly, parents of participating young people welcomed the break from energetic children within which what are often very cramped accommodation conditions. In general, parents reflected the views held by the young people. For other parents, whose children may not be participating, there was really no sense at all that the TYS offered a particular programme, and some were vague as to its actual existence at all.

### 3.4 Staff/Volunteer Team

3.4.1 From the perspective of the staff/volunteer team, clearly, every effort is made to provide a varied and interesting programme which affords young people as many experiential opportunities as possible. Having said that, staff are continually challenged by a series of programming issues, namely:

- The geographical remit of the service and the impact of this on access to the activities provided through the programme, the STAG policy of ensuring equality of access for all Traveller children within the area and, within this context, the capacity of the programme to target young people experiencing particular difficulties
- Issues relating to resources and the relatively high cost of the most popular programme activities
- The challenge of ensuring that the programme is culturally appropriate whilst also maintaining a developmental youth service approach

<sup>3</sup> All internet activities are closely supervised by staff who ensure safe and age content access.



Of course, all of these issues will be raised again when we look at the perceived impact of the programme on the young people, their families and communities below.

- 3.4.2 The broad geographical remit of the TYS is a constant challenge for the team in relation to equality of access, health and safety issues and the availability of the one licensed driver of the community bus. To state the obvious, Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown county has seen particular urban and industrial development in recent years, moving from one part of the county to another can be difficult and time consuming at peak traffic times. Public transport links to the STAG resource centre are not excellent, and again, traffic is an issue here – as well as the fact that participants will often not access available public transport due to parental concerns for safety etc. TYS has access to a community bus and has one licensed driver. Given that the rolling programme operates after school (usually from 4pm – 6.30pm), in tandem with traffic issues, the availability of only one licensed bus driver causes significant difficulty. As a result, staff are concerned that young people living close to the centre have almost unrestricted access to all activities, whilst others living further away – if the bus is not available – experience significant difficulties accessing the centre.
- 3.4.3 In addition, given the size of the geographical area and the numbers of young people, a decision has been taken to rotate the programme – that is, for the programme to focus on one particular area for a period of time and then move on to another. This causes a number of difficulties. On the one hand, sometimes, the bus can arrive at a particular location ready to collect children and they are not there, or they do not want to attend – or a number of other issues present which means that service take up on a particular evening is relatively low. Thus, the bus has been provided, the programme planned, staff are waiting to work with the young people – and because of circumstances beyond the staff's control, numbers are very low. This causes more particular concern is a particular activity has been booked which requires using resources other than staff and the centre. The sense is always that there are young people who could have enjoyed participating in the activities and because of distance, the *rota system* and other more difficult factors to address, they cannot. This is particularly challenging in the light of the fact that the *rota system* does not facilitate the ongoing targeting of developmental youth work inputs with those experiencing significant difficulties, rather it seeks to spread the service across a large geographical area in an equitable way. Staff asserted that they do, sometimes, attempt to access more locally based facilities within which to implement their programmes with limited success.
- 3.4.4 Another continually apparent challenge to staff is the knowledge that specific targeting is needed to deal with identified needs, which sometimes conflicts with the overall vision of STAG as an organisation. STAG works to ensure that STAG, the TYS and its projects are fully accessible to all members of the Traveller community. In addition, the team is also aware that, targeted interventions can cause conflict within the Traveller community because community members have an expectation that all young people should participate in all activities. This can sometimes be a strain on already very limited resources, especially when attendance is low for some of the activities. The complexities associated with this issue and the need to balance equality of access and the responsibilities of a professional Youth Service needs further discussion within STAG and the TYS and will be further explored in this document in the section dealing with recommendations.
- 3.4.5 Resourcing the programme is also of significant concern to staff, given the relatively high cost of some of the most popular activities – namely horse riding. In addition, staff identified that the limitations attached to certain funding streams can restrict programming and thus, impact on effectiveness. From their perspective, many of the available funding streams are directed to the ten to



twenty-one age group and cover specific programmes most readily associated with mainstream youth provision. This is challenging for a service that seeks to respond to the needs of all young Travellers within the culturally appropriate definitions of what it means to be a young person within the Traveller community. For example, within Traveller culture, a young Traveller is defined within the six to fourteen year age range, young girls from sixteen plus may be already preparing for marriage, and boys over fifteen are considered to be men. When viewed from this perspective, it is understandable that staff perceive that current funding streams may not have the scope to fully address the needs of the young people in their care.

### 3.5 Management Committee

3.5.1 The Management Committee of STAG – the body with overall responsibility for the planning, development of the TYS work plan – were also positive about the TYS Programme, reflecting on the variety of activities and the attempts of the service to meet the needs of the young people engaged. Again, the horse riding programme was named as the most popular activity, although the cost and the relatively small numbers associated with that cost was identified as challenging. Creative programmes such as *Video Man* were also highlighted as having had a clear and visible effect on the self-confidence of the young people.

3.5.2 In addition, the Management Committee also spoke about the ways in which the work with young people is linked in with the other programmes provided through STAG. For example, the Primary Health Care training programme is focused on Traveller women, who then start to understand and trust the TYS and actively move towards ensuring their children are engaged in the programme. In their view, in addition to building confidence and providing positive recreational opportunities, TYS staff are considered to be very positive role models, not only by the young people, but also by their families.

### 3.6 Youth Advisory Group

3.6.1 From the perspective of the Advisory Group, which is charged with providing support to the development of the service but does not have a specific leadership role in this regard, the TYS programme is a well managed, high quality programme which operates well within good practice guidelines and specific child protection legislation. The perception here is that attendance is good and parental support for the work of the service, and active engagement with the service is positive and is being further developed. Important here, was the linkage between parents participating in other STAG services and supports and the access afforded their children to a high quality youth service. In addition, the Advisory Group asserted that the work of the service, in dealing with stereotypes around behaviour etc. and in providing adequate and appropriate supervision is very positive, thus developing and modeling best practice in a very obvious way within the broader community landscape.

3.6.2 In addition, there was a clear sense here that the service is developing networks with partner organisations and that these networks will develop further moving forward. The specific Traveller focus of the service and its real success in actively engaging young people from the Traveller community was also named here, given that the group feels it is particularly challenging to attempt to integrate young Travellers into mainstream provision. Finally, Advisory Group members felt that the TYS could make better use of already existing youth facilities within the mainstream community.

### 3.7 Closing Remarks

3.7.1 In conclusion, participants reflections on the TYS programme were overwhelmingly positive, given the significant challenges of the scale of the geographical area covered by the project, the fact that



available funding does not necessarily marry well with the needs of a community for whom a member who is over sixteen is often considered an adult and may be preparing for marriage and the expectation of community members that the service works with all Traveller young people in the area.

- 3.7.2 From the perspective of the young people themselves, who, it is important to note were not oblivious to the limitations which these issues place on the service, *it's the bestest*. From the perspective of parents whose children participate in the service it is providing not only opportunities to engage with activities which might otherwise be unavailable or inaccessible to their children, but also provides what might be considered *respite* for children from accommodation which is often unsuitable and sometimes completely inappropriate for those types of activities.



## 4 Reflections on TYS Structures

### 4.1 Opening Remarks

4.1.1 The purpose of this section is to provide an overview of the outcomes of the consultative review process in relation to the currently existing structures. By *structures* we mean the staffing and management of the currently existing programme and the delivery of the service across its broad geographical remit. The accelerated growth of the TYS over the last five years – from its initial summer programme, through to the broad based activity and developmental programme discussed in the last section of this document.

### 4.2 Young People

4.2.1 If we are honest, the young people we spoke to were not *entirely* interested in having a discussion with us around the structures in place to design, develop, deliver or manage the TYS. Having said that, however, they were very interested in discussing the *rota* system and the staffing/volunteers of the service. As indicated in Appendix 1, below, the TYS provides a broad, activities based programme on a *rota* basis to young people living throughout the Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown area.

4.2.2 For the young people, given that – as stated above – they *love participating in TYS and just want more of it, please!*, the *rota* system was one of their primary concerns. There was no sense forthcoming that they did not understand the system of delivery. In many ways, their reflections showed that they were clear that there were a lot of young people to cater for, that the area covered was big and that a decision had been made to operate the service this way. What they were not happy with was the *long wait* for opportunities to participate in the various activities and the fact that in the interregnum, they really felt they had “*nothing to do*”. When we asked them what, in fact, they did during this time, their responses were invariably around “*just hanging around...play my Nintendo/play station...get into more trouble...*” Again, whilst they were aware of why this happens, they still did not like it. This issue resonated in our discussions with the parents, staff and advisory group.

4.2.3 In relation to the staff/volunteers of TYS, all the young people we met were hugely positive. In fact, when one little boy piped up “*They fill our hearts with joy*” there was laughter, but also an underlying acknowledgement of how important the staff are to the young people. They spoke of how they looked forward to the bus coming to collect them, of the *craic* they had with staff on the bus, how the staff *look after them* and how they learned things from the staff about the consequences of particular types of behaviour. In the discussion about an overnight event where there had been some difficult behaviour which had been challenged by the staff and volunteers, one of the things that came through very clearly was that there was a significant amount of respect for the staff and a sense that given that they were trying to look after them and facilitate them to *have a good time*, it was not OK to upset them and ruin their efforts. As one said “*They try to show us how to be good*. In addition, the young people asserted that they felt listened to, that their opinion was sought in the development of the programme, that if they made a request the staff/volunteers made an effort to respond positively and, of course, that staff understood the importance of *goodies* as well as healthy eating!

4.2.4 In the final analysis it would seem fair to say that whilst the *rota* is practically, rather than conceptually, challenging for the young people, the relationship with the staff/volunteers is incredibly positive and, therefore, important to the young people. We didn't ask them what would happen if these relationships weren't as positive, but they also made the point that behaviour and other issues are dealt with clearly and fairly and said “*they don't hold it against me*”.



### 4.3 Parents

- 4.3.1 For parents, the primary issue of concern, and focus of their discussions, in relation to the structures in place within TYS, was again, the *rota* system. For parents who are not actively engaged in either TYS or other STAG programmes, the long breaks between programmes was confusing and it is debatable whether these parents perceive there to be a structured TYS programme. The parents who are involved in other TYS programmes seemed to understand the rationale, but were still challenged around the wait between different programmes. For parents who work or volunteer in TYS, dealing with the challenges emerging within their community around the structure of the programme and suggested that perhaps some other community members felt that because they worked or volunteered with TYS, their children received *more* of a service than others in the community.
- 4.3.2 Another issue of concern to parents was around transport to the resource centre, if the bus was not available and for the Open Nights as, in most cases, there are younger or other siblings to be taken care of, as well as other responsibilities.
- 4.3.3 Finally, within this context, parents felt that, even though they knew the service was resourced to deal with a particular age group, it was very difficult to explain to children outside of that age range why they could not participate in what were perceived as exciting activities. Thus, a couple of parents spoke about younger children crying or being otherwise very upset when they could not go with their older siblings to the resource centre or on day trips. Of course, the broader age range of the summer programme was cited as helpful here, but again, the question arose as to how you explain to a six or seven year old that they can go on a particular trip in the summer, but not participate in a particular activity in the winter.

### 4.4 Staff/Volunteer Team

- 4.4.1 In this section we look at the structures from the perspective of the staff/volunteer team. From the outset, there was agreement that the TYS has developed and evolved into a professional service and that every effort was made to ensure that best practice youth work operational and procedural guidelines formed the basis of the team's approach to the delivery of the service. Within the context of the discussions relating to structures, they identified the following as requiring reflection in the review report:
- Team support structures
  - The challenges facing community members with reconciling their combined roles of service user and service provider
  - Issues relating to equity of provision and the geographical remit and resource constraints of TYS
  - The importance of a real outcome from the review process
- 4.4.2 Clearly, the team operates well and provides a positive context within which the work of TYS is carried out. Relationships – between individual staff members, staff and volunteers, the co-ordinator and staff and the STAG manager, co-ordinator, staff/volunteers and management committee are very positive and afford, at different times, both individual and team support. Youth workers had received training as appropriate and felt that this afforded them opportunities to carry out their jobs more effectively. The staff/volunteer team is well supported by the team co-ordinator when issues arise, in addition to a formal monthly supervision/support meeting structure. For the co-ordinator, whilst specific support is provided by the STAG manager, there was some discussion around the need for formal external supervision in relation to issues which are specifically focused on youth work practice. In addition, staff named the time constraints placed upon them in trying to implement a



weekly team meeting, and asserted that they needed to be more structured in this regard as this was an important opportunity for them to discuss ongoing programme development and implementation issues and share information around the young people.

- 4.4.3 Finally, the staff/volunteer team seemed to clearly identify their connections into STAG as an organisation and as an employer. Whilst team members who are also community members sometimes find it challenging to deal with negative feelings or complaints about the structure of the TYS within their own community outside of work times, this was acknowledged as a particular challenge for many staff members in organisations which operate within their specific community of interest and geography. Given that all of the team, apart from the co-ordinator, are members of the community living in the Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown area, whilst acknowledging this particular challenge, community members also felt supported in this regard by both the co-ordinator and STAG. On the whole, the fact that the team comprises primarily community members was seen as adding to the strength of the team. In addition, the team composition was also considered positive in modeling empowerment within the Traveller community on an individual and collective level. Finally, the fact that the co-ordinator is a member of the settled community meant that if and when inter-community issues did arise, a level of neutrality could, potentially, be brought to the situation. The team wanted to make very clear that whilst there are challenges, and issues will continue to emerge within the context of the development of the service, structurally, TYS is operating as effectively as it can within the constraints placed upon it.
- 4.4.4 In terms of the policy of equity of access, where all STAG programmes attempt to respond to all Travellers resident in the area, as well as issues relating to perceptions around the *rota* system, the team were concerned at the ways in which it did not always facilitate them to work with particular individual young people, or groups of young people, around specific issues. In a sense, the policy was perceived as a barrier to developing targeted interventions designed to respond to the more challenging issues facing particular individual or groups of young people at specific times. In addition, the fact that there is only one licensed community bus driver on the team and the resources – in terms of team time and person power required to collect and drop off young people – also has an impact here. Of course, the geographical area covered by the service and an overall sense of organisational responsibility has clearly informed this approach, but it would seem that as the service develops moving forward, this issue will arise again and again.
- 4.4.5 Within this context – and more specifically within discussions relating to the impact of the service and the gaps in current TYS provision – the need more focused professional *youth work* service development expertise and support, from the management committee and the advisory group also emerged. Finally, the team were highly supportive of the review process and put forward the hope that the outcomes of the process would be used to inform the development of service. From their perspective, the very act of engaging in an external review process is a positive first step in mapping out that future development and will require commitment from all stakeholders.

## 4.5 Management Committee

- 4.5.1 Undoubtedly, the management committee is committed to the ongoing development of the TYS and sees it as an essential starting point for the achievement of their overall organisational mission, broad aims and specific objectives. Within the discussions relating to structures, five key issues emerged as significant, namely:
- The strengths of the organisation



- The professionalism and commitment of STAG, the Traveller Youth Service and its team
- The importance of the volunteering role played by Travellers in all of the services of STAG, and particularly in the TYS
- Resources and funding
- Networking

4.5.2 The management committee cited the long-term involvement and commitment of some of its members as an invaluable resource to all of STAG's programmes, no less so in relation to TYS. They made clear that the organisation as a whole is committed to ensuring the development of correct operating procedures and has learned to adapt to new responsibility and the duty of care of TYS, particularly in relation to child protection issues and implementing new legislation through appropriate education/training for the staff/volunteer team. Procedures and guidelines are strictly adhered to and youth workers have gone through Garda vetting procedures. As a management committee, there is also a significant and ongoing commitment to learning from past mistakes, building on lessons learned and maintaining the overall vision of STAG. This was cited as a key contributing factor to the development of STAG as an ambitious, future focused organisation. A further strength was the support received from funders since the awarding of the contract in early 2004. A continual challenge, however, for an organisation that intends to be truly Traveller led is to develop the capacity of Travellers to actively engage with the design, development and implementation of all of its programmes.

4.5.3 The management group felt that the current structures were working, particularly in relation to the reporting procedure. The TYS manager keeps an overview of the service, meets on a monthly basis with the TYS co-ordinator and receives a written report from the co-ordinator which is a compilation of written feedback from all youth workers. The manager then disseminates this report to the management a week before the formal meeting, which she also attends. The committee is also informed of any incidents arising between monthly meetings. The group was very clear that facilitating the TYS to develop under the watchful eyes of the manager and staff team was the most appropriate management model, which, they asserted, evidenced their confidence in both that structure and the team as individuals. In this regard, the management committee delegates some level of autonomy in decision making. The management role is to oversee the implementation of the agreed work plan, with new work taken on as needs are identified by staff on the ground. The management group trust the staff team and allow them to take the initiative when appropriate. The informal, positive discrimination policy – where community members are encouraged, rather than directed into particular roles within the organisation, including the TYS was also named within this context as a tool used by management in their intention to be Traveller led.

4.5.4 Volunteers from the Traveller community are considered by management to play a key role in the developmental and operational activities of both STAG and the TYS. Moving forward, however, management were clear that specific and focused guidelines need to be established for new volunteers. Of course, it is often difficult to recruit and sustain volunteers from the community, but this is a challenge which the organisation struggles with in all of its activities. Currently the TYS is supported by student placements from the Gardai and Sallynoggin College of Further Education , but issues such as Garda Clearance and firm commitment must be addressed.

4.5.6 In relation to funding, management were clear that funders have been very supportive of the TYS since its establishment. They reflected on the impact of the economic downturn on STAG, TYS and



partner organisations working with other excluded communities of interest and geography at a local, regional and national level. Already, at time of reporting, STAG has experienced budget cuts of just over six percent. Within this context, management are uncertain as to the resources which will be available to develop and grow all of their programmes in 2009 and further into the future. The already identified cuts on previous levels of resource allocation, in their view, reduces already limited resources in terms of staff time and programme costs and poses a significant challenge moving forward. Notwithstanding this, however, management are confident that the effectiveness of current human, programme and volunteering resources is being maximised.

- 4.5.7 Management raised the issue of networking as a key element in the work of TYS as a key challenge and cited previous attempts to develop networks with other youth projects within the Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown area as having been not as successful as they would have hoped. The reasons cited for this lack of success were complex, but focused around the need for TYS to meet the very specific needs within a Traveller specific cultural context. Whilst management were clearly challenged by this, they cited the fact that Traveller integration work is slow and the achievements, whilst many are not immediately apparent throughout Ireland. On the other hand, the TYS is very well networked with other Traveller organisations at local, regional and national levels.

#### 4.6 Youth Advisory Group

- 4.6.1 In terms of discussing structures, the youth advisory group attested to their relative distance from the day to day running of the TYS service, but that this does not limit their commitment to supporting and championing the TYS moving forward. In their reflections on structures, this group focused on the following key areas:
- Communication
  - The management of the TYS team
  - The structural impact of the geographical remit of the TYS
  - The need to enhance networking with other youth organisations
  - The role of the advisory group
- 4.6.2 From the perspective of the advisory group, for a service that has grown so rapidly in such a short period of time, communication has improved significantly, both in terms of the individual communication between TYS and the various agencies represented on the advisory group, and the TYS and the advisory group as a whole. Particular comment was made on the improvement in the service's programme reporting, financial reporting and accounting procedures which has been significant in recent times and are now considered to be on a much more professional level. Of course, the need for development in this area would be the same for any growing organisation, so the improvement does not necessarily mean that TYS is any different to other services. Again, although relatively distant from the day to day operational elements of the service, the group sensed that there were good programme and staff management and communications structures in place.
- 4.6.3 The advisory group discussed the geographical boundaries of TYS in relation to the various administrative boundaries operated by its main funding organisations – County Dublin VEC and Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown VEC each of which operate within different local authority boundaries. Within this context, the actual operational boundary of TYS has never been clearly defined. Whilst to a large extent, the geographical boundary of the service is *assumed*, the advisory group feel a focused piece of work around exactly naming the operational boundaries needs to be carried out as the outcomes should positively impact upon the capacity of the service to attract funding moving forward. Given



the complexity of the boundary issue, the relationships between the various statutory agencies within the boundary context, this issue was of particular concern to the group.

- 4.6.4 In terms of the TYS's networking with other youth service providers in the area, advisory group members were clear that significant progress had been made and that the operational elements of the service and its supervision of young people had progressed the integration issue. Networking, however, was not considered to be a key service development priority. In relation to developing the service moving forward – and increasing the impact and sustainability of the TYS's work with young people, see below - advisory group members asserted the importance of networking for information, resource and practice development sharing and felt it was appropriate that the service place more of an emphasis on this structural element of its work in the future.
- 4.6.5 As already stated the advisory group sees its role as supporting the TYS in its development as a *developmental youth service* for Travellers in tandem with championing the acknowledgement, recognition and resourcing of the significant work being undertaken currently. They cited issues such as their role in championing the need for a more flexible approach from funders in relation to provision age groups (there being a clear distinction between the Traveller and settled community in this regard around typical age groups within the settled community).
- 4.6.6 Finally, the advisory group re-asserted their commitment to the TYS and wished to encourage the TYS to utilise them more effectively, in relation to funding, development of practice and *professional advice* on service development issues through more regular and active engagement through reviewing their role within the context of the structure of the service.

#### 4.7 Closing Remarks

- 4.7.1 Again, throughout the course of this section of the report, we have outlined the reflections of review participants in relation to the structures in place to design, develop and deliver the TYS. Staff are respected and acknowledged as significant supports and role models who are committed to their work by the young people, their parents, management and the advisory group. Management, reporting, accounting and staff support structures emerge as professional and appropriate from the perspective of the management committee and the advisory group. Notwithstanding this, however, a number of structural challenges emerged also, including the geographical remit of the service – the impact of which is discussed in more detail, below - the need for additional, focused and expert *youth work* supervision for the co-ordinator and the challenges faced by team members who are also community members. Clearly, though, a significant opportunity for the development of a more structured set of supports from the advisory group also emerged within this section.



## 5 Reflections on the Impact of TYS

### 5.1 Opening Remarks

5.1.1 The purpose of this section is to provide an overview of the outcomes of the consultative review process in relation to the perceived impact the programme is having on the young people, their families and the Traveller community as a whole. Inherent in this is a discussion of issues participants raised around barriers to improving that impact.

### 5.2 Young People

5.2.1 From the perspective of the young people, TYS is having a significant impact in a number of key areas, namely:

- Access to specific activities through the programme
- Their confidence and understanding of the impact of their behaviour
- Their sense of what they can become, of having role models and making decisions

5.2.2 We detailed the young people's sense of the programme and their enjoyment of particular activities. For many of the young people we met, access to these types of activities outside of their time with the TYS seemed to be very limited, hence their complete conviction that they wanted more. In reality, a number of the young people participating in the service come from large families, often live in overcrowded accommodation and experience significant educational, economic, social and cultural exclusion. Just as real, however, is the number of young people we met who may experience significant educational, economic, social and cultural exclusion, but who also present a huge amount of cleverness, laughter, energy, wit, sarcasm and some significant talent on the art and entertainment fronts. The role of a youth service is, at a very basic level, to support young people to develop their emotional, physical and educational potential towards active citizenship and participation in the social, cultural and economic life of their communities.

5.2.3 When we asked the young people what sort of impact being involved in TYS had on them and the boy said *"they fill our lives with joy"* and his comrades fell off their chairs laughing, clearly indicating to us a group of young people who were in no way phased by meeting two strange grey haired ladies with flip charts and notebooks. On a more serious note, however, the following is the eager response the young people gave to the grey haired ladies asking them the question *"what have you learned?"*

*" ... we learned to be good ... not to give back-cheek ... we have fun ... work with other children ... make new friends ... make things... we come when there's pick-up (community bus) ... mostly once a week ... wish we could come more often ... "*

5.2.3 In terms of developing relationships with positive adult role models outside of their families, they said:

*" ... they are very good and take care of us ... they understand the problems children have ... they take you on trips ... they give us biscuits and drinks , oh, and fruit, yeah, food that's good for you".*

5.2.4 In conclusion, if a youth service is to have an impact on the young people, their families and communities as a whole, the development of these types of relationships is essential. It is very clear that the TYS is very popular with all the young people, and they feel safe with the youth workers



while in the care of the TYS. There is a clearly developed understanding of the connection between bad behavior and the resulting consequences, and the knowledge that positive behavior results in good outcomes and rewards. As stated in section 3, we didn't ask them what would happen if these relationships weren't as positive, but they also made the point that behaviour and other issues are dealt with clearly and fairly and said *"they don't hold it against me"*.

### 5.3 Parents

5.3.1 From the perspective of parents, the most significant impact that TYS is having on the young people was cited as noticeable confidence building and empowerment of the young people, coupled with the development of practical life skills, e.g. The effect of team work being modeled by Traveller youth workers has a very positive impact on the development of social skills among the young people, including working as part of a group, developing more appropriate and respectful communication skills and marked behavioural improvements.

5.3.2 In relation to the impact of the service on them as parents, clearly, the opportunity for the young people to develop the types of hard and soft skills named above was the most positive. Many of these parents are trying to manage large families in difficult living conditions, thus, the impact for them of opportunities for their children to experience different activities, develop their confidence and self esteem and engage with positive role models should not be underestimated. In addition, some parents were clear that the service provides an opportunity for young people to get off the site and away from those difficult living conditions. For others, the fact that their children were doing something useful with their leisure time was also a positive impact.

5.3.3 Within the context of this discussion, it was also clear that for some parents, the space afforded them by knowing their children were being well looked after, enjoying themselves, developing their confidence and skills and meeting positive and trusted adult role models was also a very important and often unacknowledged impact of the work of TYS.

### 5.4 Staff/Volunteer Team

5.4.1 In this section we look at the impact of TYS from the perspective of the staff/volunteer team. Below, we outline the three key impacts emerging in relation to:

- Quality of life
- Positive role modeling
- Impact on challenging behaviours presented by some young people

5.4.2 Moving on from this, we then detail the staff's reflections on the key issues informing the current level of impact which the service can have, namely:

- The expectations of the Traveller community
- The location of the STAG resource centre
- Attempting to engage families, particularly men, as volunteers with the service

5.4.3 Above, we have already outlined the positive impact STAG can have on the quality of life of the young people participating in the service. Within the context of discussions with the staff/volunteer team, participants asserted that, in their view, the TYS has succeeded in building the capacity of children and provides opportunities for development and progression in the young people engaged in the service. In addition, they cited the fact that the service has had a broader impact on the Traveller youth workers, as it has provided training, development and employment opportunities. In an even



broader sense, they asserted a sense that because the service is trusted and respected by parents and is embedded just as equally in Traveller culture as it is in youth work good practice positively impacts on the community as it starts to see the results of positive, structured and developmental engagement with young people.

- 5.4.4 The role of Traveller youth workers in the centre was again cited by the staff as a key impact on the young people accessing the centre. The exposure to healthy respectful boundaries, within a dynamic work environment is perceived as having an impact on the development of more positive behaviours and enhanced communication skills among the young people and between young people, their families, peers and community.
- 5.4.5 Prior to the establishment of TYS, the Exchange House project provided an activities based programme for Traveller young people in the area. TYS provides a different type of service in that its work is focused on the provision of developmental youth work type activities and engagement with the young people. The staff team put forward the appraisal that participating young people are learning respect (for each other, for youth workers, for their parents) and a deeper understanding of the link between behavior and consequences. The instances of restraining aggressive behavior are infrequent, but the team is well aware of the negative impact on the other children and on themselves as workers. In addition, family tensions outside of STAG can sometimes be brought into the centre, but the presence of Traveller staff seems to be an advantage in this context as the young people learning to differentiate and to leave family tensions outside of the centre.
- 5.4.6 The expectations of Traveller families in relation to accessing the services and programmes of the TYS has an effect on the impact of the service on two distinct, but interconnected levels. On one level, facilitating such a broad geographical area with one community bus and one licensed driver causes, in their view, a significant diminution of the overall impact of the service. In tandem, the expectation within the Traveller community that children will be picked up deepens the already significant challenges posed by the scale of the geographical remit. Parents' (and childrens') expectations cannot always be met, and, although they did acknowledge the transport, childcare and family difficulties faced by some, they did express concern that some apathy around this issue exists within the community. In this latter regard, staff asserted that parents need to take on board the limitations of the service and that parent support for the service is vital. As already noted by the management committee, volunteering from the Traveller community is very important to the on-going development of the TYS and additional community volunteers could enhance the potential impact TYS is having. In addition, the staff/volunteer team identified the lack of male volunteers to support the older boys/young men as a specific concern.
- 5.4.6 The staff team identified access to the STAG resource centre, in an industrial estate in one of the most congested (vis-à-vis traffic) areas of the county at a location which is some distance from where the young people live (see section 5.4.5, above) as a significant barrier to the impact which the service can have, as most of the families of the young people would not allow their children to travel to the centre alone – even if there was a direct public transport link. In addition, the building is not youth friendly, has limited space and is too open to enable different activities to run concurrently.

## 5.5 Management Committee

- 5.5.1 The views of the management committee in relation to the impact of the service on the young people, their families and the broader community were similar to those expressed by the young people themselves, their parents and the staff/volunteer team. From their perspective, the TYS has developed



and evolved during the four years since its establishment and has been very beneficial for young people with a marked increase in confidence and self-esteem. The model used around engaging young people who also learn while participating in fun activities is considered effective.

5.5.2 In addition, management are clear that there is a longer term impact on the development of the leadership potential of the young people, and thus a broader community impact will emerge, over time. Significantly, in this regard, management also attested to the positive role modeling accruing to the young people from their engagement with the youth workers.

## 5.6 Youth Advisory Group

5.6.1 Again, the advisory group's analysis of the impact of the service reflects the impacts named above, especially in relation to the short, medium and long term benefits accruing to the young people, their families and the community as a whole. In addition, the work done by the TYS and the levels of support provided were considered to be having an impact on the understanding of the specific issues being faced by Traveller young people and, could, potentially, impact on the integration of Travellers with the settled community. Significantly, however, the advisory group did name a number of issues which could enhance the already identified impact of the service, namely:

- Increased networking with other youth service providers
- The use of existing community infrastructure within the young people's communities of origin

5.6.2 In terms of enhancing the impact of the service, advisory group members were clear that the development of closer working relationships with other youth service providers in the area would go a long way. In this regard, issues relating to the geographical spread, the *rota* system, the development of TYS practice and the implementation of collaborative initiatives could be addressed and could result in more sustainable results.

5.6.3 Linked with the issue of increased networking, the advisory group suggested that if particular programmes could be implemented within already existing community facilities, rather than only in the STAG resource centre, again, the number of programmes which it is possible to implement at any one time could, consequently, be increased, therefore impacting on the availability of the service to additional young people. Of course, issues relating to transport could, potentially, arise again, but perhaps not in as significant a manner.

## 5.7 Closing Remarks

5.7.1 Again, throughout the course of this section of the report, there is general agreement that the service is having an impact on a number of levels, namely on the young people themselves, on their families, on the Traveller community and, to some extent, on the settled community. Clearly, challenges which inform the extent of this impact emerged, with the geographical remit, transport, parents' expectations, the resources available and the level of networking with other youth service providers and community organisations being named.

5.7.2 In the next section of this report, we look at the issues identified by participants in the review process and clearly, these too must be considered as affecting the potential impact of the service.



## 6 Key Findings in Relation to Identified Issues in the TYS Programme and Structures

### 6.1 Opening Remarks

6.1.1 In this section of the report, we bring forward an analysis of the review's key findings in relation to the emerging identified issues in TYS programmes and structures which are, or could, affect impact. Within this context, challenges and service gaps emerging are identified. It is important to say, again, that our analysis is in no way trying to *fix something that isn't broken* as clearly, TYS – for a service in operation for just five years – is doing well. The young people really enjoy their engagement with the service, are trusting and confident in their engagements with staff (and grey haired ladies with flip charts) and are clear that they learn useful skills through their engagement. Parents trust TYS, feel it is having a positive impact on their children and the wider community. Staff are respected and acknowledged by colleagues, young people, management and the advisory group, are committed to and enjoy their work, have a clear sense of their overall role in STAG as an organisation, can clearly analyse the limitations of and challenges faced by the service and are clear that it is having an impact on the quality of life of the young people, their families and the Traveller community in Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown. Management trust the staff team, respect and acknowledge their work as a key element in achieving the objectives of STAG and are aware of the challenges facing TYS within the context of reductions in resources. From the perspective of the advisory group – which, importantly, comprises representatives of the TYS key funding agencies – the service is well managed, is appropriate and effective in its communication and reporting and is having some level of impact on the ways in which agencies are developing responses to the needs of Travellers within the area.

6.1.2 Thus, to re-iterate, the service is doing well and meeting its key objectives of developing and implementing a youth service for Traveller young people in Dun Laoghaire – Rathdown. On another level, some issues emerged in reflections on the programme, the structures to deliver the programme and the effect these have on TYS's capacity to maximise its impact. These issues are the focus of this section of the report. Again, from all perspectives, reflections on the programme were overwhelmingly positive. Below we identify a number of issues which emerged within this context.

### 6.2 The Rota System and Access: Combined Quantitative Impact on TYS Participants

6.2.1 Do young people always want more? This is a question we consistently ask ourselves when we look at the work of youth service providers. To some extent, our general answer is yes and for most young people actively participating in a programme of activities and developmental initiatives, the fact that they are there is often an indication that they would participate more often if the opportunity arose or if the particular programmes were extended or enhanced. Young people participating in TYS definitely want more of what they like – more horse-riding, more swimming, more overnight trips and more back up plans in the event of bad weather. The boys would like to see an X-Box, Wii or Play station in the centre for the rainy days and the girls would like more trips to the cinema, more dance classes and more swimming. In fact, both boys and girls would probably, if forced into it, really enjoy engaging in any of the aforementioned activities. In terms of new programme activities – one particular boy just kept saying the word *fishing* over and over again, while another felt it was reasonable to assume that a graffiti project would be enjoyed by everyone.

6.2.2 When, however, a group of young people like these, who have particular difficulties in relation to transport and the location of the STAG resource centre, who live in what are often very overcrowded conditions say they want more of a programme which they might be able to access for six weeks at a



time with a gap of months before they have that opportunity again, the operational elements of a particular programme should at least be reviewed, if not addressed. When this sentiment is also expressed by the parents of young people participating in that service and the staff team charged with delivering it, clearly there is an issue to be addressed.

- 6.2.3 On analysis, if one looks at a settled young person’s participation in a mainstream youth service over the period of a year, allowing for weekends and the closure of the service for a particular amount of time (four weeks) to allow staff to re-energise (although this would rarely happen). Then, if one imagines that this young person participates at a minimum for say three hours per week that the service is open and allows for them to actively participate in that service for one week of a summer programme (this would usually be two weeks, but we are making a conservative estimation) for, say, three hours per day, and other holiday type provision for five days, we can say that the settled young person in the mainstream service has an opportunity to engage for approximately 244 hours over that year. This estimation, of course, does not include the availability of drop-in, youth club or *youth café* opportunities, if such a service exists in their community, which could add an additional 144 hours to that total.
- 6.2.4 In contrast, a young person participating in the TYS programme which is operated on a rota system across a large geographical area has the opportunity to participate in the service for, approximately, three hours per week over a six week period three times a year. This in addition to three day trips in the summer programme (eight hours per day) and the Christmas event (three hours) and, perhaps, an additional six hours for various other activities. If they live close to the STAG resource centre, they can engage for an additional two hours per week for say 48 weeks per year. This young person, therefore has an opportunity to engage for approximately 231 hours per year. If they do not live close to the STAG resource centre or the one community bus can’t pick them up to participate in the open evening, their opportunity to engage is approximately 87 hours per year. The table, below, shows the equation we used to develop these approximations, and its outcome, perhaps more clearly.

**Table 1: Comparative Service Access**

Average Mainstream Youth Service Participant <sup>4</sup>			Average TYS Participant		
Engagement Type	Hours	Total	Engagement Type	Hours	Total
Weekly	1 x 3 hrs x 48	144	Weekly	1 x 3 hrs x 6 x 3	54
Summer Programme	5 x 8 hrs x 1	40	Summer Programme	4x 8 hrs x 1	24
Easter/Other Holiday	5 x 8 hrs x 1	40	Other (Christmas Event etc.)	12	12
<b>Total opportunity to engage in hrs. per year</b>		<b>244</b>	<b>Total opportunity to engage in hrs. per year</b>		<b>98</b>
<b>With local drop-in/youth café etc (+144 hrs)</b>		<b>388</b>	<b>With access to open evening (+ 144 hrs)</b>		<b>242</b>

- 6.2.5 In reality, therefore, we are saying that the operation of the rota system means:
- If a TYS participant cannot access the open evening, they have access to approximately 40% of the service of their settled counterpart who lives in a community without a drop-in/*youth café* type facility
  - The TYS participant who experiences difficulties with access to STAG resource centre and cannot participate in the open evenings has access to just over 25% of the service available to a settled young person living in a community with a drop-in/*youth café* type facility
  - If the TYS participant has access to the TYS open evening (either through parents, the community bus or living close by), their service access is roughly equivalent to that of a settled young person living in a community without access to a local drop-in/*youth café* type facility

<sup>4</sup> These estimates are based on previous work Clarity has done in evaluating mainstream youth service provision and are very conservative



- 6.2.6 Of course, some of the young people participating in TYS are also engaged with mainstream youth provision, although anecdotally, this engagement is, perceived as intermittent or targeted through the school completion programme or other such initiatives. Others – particularly boys, are actively engaged in local sporting organisations. Clearly, therefore, the equation above does not tell the whole story (as no equation can or should attempt) of a TYS participant's access to developmental youth work support. On another level, however, both the management committee and the TYS staff asserted that Traveller integration into mainstream services and supports in general is particularly challenging and has not been as successful as one would have hoped. In addition, it is fair to say that mainstream provision – of all types of services - often faces particular challenges with engaging Travellers. Another challenge faced by mainstream provision is in encouraging settled young people to actively engage with developmental youth services.
- 6.2.7 On our analysis however, through discussions with TYS staff and the young people, access to TYS is clearly limited as a result of the geographical remit combined with issues relating to transport and the implementation of the *rota* system. We started this section with an exploration of some of the very particular issues faced by Traveller young people and the previous section with what can only be described as a clear request from TYS young people for more. Given that this particular method of delivery is based upon a core parent organisation principle – of providing equitable opportunity of access for all Travellers in the area to all STAG programmes, including TYS, this raises a significant challenge with its roots in policy, practice and community expectation. In terms of affecting the potential impact TYS can have on the young people, their families and the Traveller community, management and staff must address this issue moving forward, for if a young person in receipt of roughly the equivalent of a quarter of the opportunities of her/his counterpart in the settled community can achieve as much as we have seen during the course of this review, imagine what that same young person with 50% or even 75% of the access of their mainstream counterpart could achieve. In section 7, below, we make a series of recommendations designed to inform the organisation in addressing this most important issue moving forward.

### 6.3 Journeying from Youth Club to Youth Service

- 6.3.1 Most analysts will attest to the fact that when resources are limited, whatever the reason, but particularly when opportunities for funding are receding, a key funding priority for all agencies will be to target resources where there is evidence, based on best practice guidelines, innovation, agreed targets and indicators of achievement, that they will be most effective. This targeting is apparent in the youth sector, where generic programmes are implemented in order to provide pathways for those young people experiencing the most profound difficulties to access targeted and specific supports. For example, a youth service might develop a programme of activities to facilitate a group to explore issues in relation to their health, within which they will cover areas such as nutrition, the impact of smoking, sexual health, drug or alcohol use/misuse, mental health etc. Young people then have an opportunity to identify particular health challenges and may then either explore them in a group setting or seek individual support from their youth worker. In other cases, the young person's response to, or type of engagement with, particular elements of the programme can often lead the youth worker to explore particular issues in more detail with either the group or in individual one to one work with a particular young person. Suffice to say, as a result, most young people will benefit generally from the programme but some may require additional support, either from a youth worker or a relevant and appropriate referral agency.
- 6.3.2 This, along with levels of training, the implementation of policies and procedures and other factors, defines a developmental youth service from a youth club, or a sports club etc. The focus is to support



young people to achieve their potential, and within the developmental continuum, some may require more support than others. Informal education in this regard is different to formal education as it is based on the principles of self-determination and choice, discussion and analysis, rather than curriculum or regulation. As one youngster in another service told us “I get kicked out of school all the time, but here, if I do something wrong it’s worse, I have to talk about it, work out why I did it and try to come up with ways of stopping it from happening again.<sup>5</sup>” For any of us, this would be the more challenging option.

6.3.3 It is clear from the reflections described in this document that TYS is well on the way to becoming a good practice model of youth service provision. Staff distinguish TYS from the former Exchange House provision in terms of the shift from focusing purely on the provision of activities to a more developmental model. In fact, in discussions of the challenges and impact of dealing with challenging behaviour, developing the young people’s confidence in assessing the impact of their behaviour and the potential consequences, spending time with young people to build robust relationships, staff were not only clearly using *developmental youth work type* language, but displaying all the characteristics of professional youth workers. The programme is planned to ensure it responds to the needs expressed by the young people, the issues emerging with particular young people from time to time are addressed in a timely, non judgmental fashion, the activities are developmental and culturally appropriate and the young people are listened to and supported to become active members of their community. The impact is also clear, on behaviour, on confidence and self-esteem, on relationships with peers, family and the staff team, in their artwork and energy and smiling, open faces. All of this against a backdrop of limited resources, the impact of access and the *rota* system, of the clear social, economic and cultural exclusion experienced in a very real way by the Traveller community. To some degree, given the fact that TYS participants have the potential to be future leaders in their community, in STAG and would seem to be using TYS as a place to find role models of a successful marriage between their particular culture and the world of work, the stakes seem very high indeed.

**Table 2: TYS Participant Profile**

Indicator	Participants
% Resident on a halting site	30%
Average no. of people in household	5.17
% Resident in a RAPID Area	21.1%
% Out of School	16.4%
No. Out of school < 16 years	11
% Presenting with obvious behavioural issues	15.6%
No. living in families with substance use/misuse issues	5
No. living in families described as experiencing <i>difficult circumstances</i>	18
% Living in one-parent household	20%
% Participants < 10 years	28.9%

At time of reporting, TYS had 128 registered participants, ranging in age from 5 to 21

6.2.4 A number of issues emerged in the review which need to be taken on board in order to move even further on that journey – which of course, never ends in perfection – and could have the potential to support the service to more effectively target the most significant need emerging within the Traveller community. On our analysis of the profile of TYS participants which was based on a template provided to TYS and completed using already existing data and the professional discernment of the

<sup>5</sup> Extrapolated from data gathered in the evaluation of Cherry Orchard Equine Education and Training Centre (2006) *It’s not all about the horses you know!*



co-ordinator, the indicators of relative disadvantage emerging were particularly apparent. Table 2, above, looks at the experience of TYS participants of particular indicators of disadvantage.

- 6.2.5 30% of TYS young people currently live on halting sites and just over 21% are resident in a RAPID area – Glen Druid is a particularly difficult halting site in the Shanganagh / Loughlinstown RAPID area. Nationally, residency of a RAPID area is the single overarching and agreed indicator of disadvantage – in terms of education, health, community safety, physical environment, family support, youth issues and employment and training. Combine this with the agreed health and social well-being impacts of living on a halting site and these two indicators alone express the significant and profound disadvantage experienced by TYS participants. In addition, young people living in families where substance use/misuse is an issue are also acknowledged to be more likely to experience substance use/misuse issues. Over 15% of the young people present with obvious behavioural issues and 11 young people aged under 16 years are described as *out of school*. Finally, 20% live in one parent families – a particularly challenging issue for the Traveller community and youth workers describe 18 participants as living in *difficult family circumstances*.
- 6.2.6 If we return to our discussion on the journey from youth club to youth service, and bear in mind the very brief participant profile outlined above, it is clear that having established, built trust in the community and with the young people, TYS has a duty of care and a moral responsibility to move towards enhancing the already existing programme with a series of specific programmes targeted to meet the specific needs of young people experiencing at least some of the issues named above. In terms of resourcing this enhancement, a number of options are possible, though clearly a piece of work around dealing with the community expectation of equity will be a key element of any option identified and ensuring that targeted responses do not result in particular children being “branded”. Again, we make recommendations around moving towards targeting in the next section.

### 6.3 Developing the Expertise Available to TYS

- 6.3.1 Moving on from the last section, clearly, TYS has been well supported by expert organisational and management expertise to date, specific child protection, leadership training, reporting, staff support and financial accountability procedures are now clearly in place. Staff are either already qualified, or on the way to qualifying in *youth and community work* and are fully committed to the ongoing development of the service. This would seem to provide a firm foundation for the continuation of the TYS journey, where an additional priority to develop and implement – either in house or in collaboration with other organisations – more targeted programmes to deal with the more challenging issues facing participants is put in place.
- 6.3.2 A number of issues in relation to this emerged in the review, and could be considered within an *internal/external* type of framework. Firstly, if the co-ordinator is to design, develop and manage the delivery of more targeted programmes, additional and perhaps, external, support and professional development expertise would be helpful. This does not change the reporting relationship between the co-ordinator and manager, but rather would seem to be an important addition to what is an already supportive, respectful and acknowledging relationship. In turn, this could have the potential to further develop the team skills set and thus maximise the impact of TYS on the core organisational objectives of STAG.
- 6.3.3 In tandem with this, developing the networking element of the TYS, raised as an issue by both management and the advisory group, could bring TYS into more stark relief on the local youth service landscape, would enhance the already positive profile of the service and perhaps, afford opportunities



for more proactive collaboration between TYS and partner youth organisations. In addition, given the impact of the geographical location and the issues described in Table 1, it could also create opportunities for Traveller young people to access locally based provision, in addition to the clearly important and culturally appropriate provision in TYS.

- 6.3.4 When analysing the potential organisational benefits of enhanced networking, the phrase “*if you're not in you can't win*” comes to mind, knowing more people, developing practice, identifying collaborative opportunities, increased knowledge around funding and opportunities to innovatively access it, professional development (and, as a result, programme development and enhanced impact) are all well documented outcomes of enhanced organisational and professional networking. In addition, RAPID are about to develop a youth strategy for the area, and TYS needs to ensure that Inter-Agency Steering Group for Travellers are well informed around the specific challenges faced by Traveller young people.
- 6.3.5 Finally, the advisory group would seem to be a clear source of developmental youth work expertise. Their willingness to champion and support TYS moving forward was clearly articulated in the review session. Looking at their role and providing them with more structured opportunities to support the service as it moves forward could clearly add value to the TYS knowledge bank.

#### **6.4 Traveller Culture Specific Issues Relating to Age Ranges and Funding**

- 6.4.1 Sessions with parents, staff, management and the advisory group raised particular issues in relation to age ranges and the ways in which funding for developmental youth work is built around a particular set of assumptions. For parents, the fact that particular activities and programmes are not open to children under ten were particularly challenging to explain, especially when parts of the programme are open to this age range. For some, it was as simple as dealing with the impact of their younger children not being allowed *on the bus*, for others, the cultural issues of the point at which a young person becomes an adult were raised.
- 6.4.3 For staff and management, a consistent challenge emerged in their recognition of the needs of the younger age group and the fact that constraints around funding did not always allow them to respond to what were clear and identified needs, above and beyond their sense that some younger children “*just feel left out*”. In tandem with this, both staff and management named the real challenges in engaging with young Traveller men. In their view, the profound cultural issues around young males from 15 years onwards need to be addressed and supported if the TYS and STAG are to actively move towards bridging the gap between mainstream and Traveller culture.
- 6.4.3 On another level, given that both staff and management actively engage in the allocation of TYS resources, the age ranges attached to particular funding can be particularly challenging. For example, if a young Traveller woman is preparing for marriage at 17, she is more likely to participate in a structured young women's group than the current TYS programme and a Traveller boy is considered to be a man at 15 and definitely will not want to engage in the TYS programme, but be seeking to leave school and find work, again, they are more likely to want to participate in a young men's group that focuses on particular activities such as horse care for example. Then, there are seven, eight and nine year olds, who could definitely benefit from the programme but are too young. From the perspective of the advisory group, these issues have started to be acknowledged by funding agencies as a result of the ongoing work of the TYS, but change would require a realignment of the roles of various government departments, is always slow no matter what the issue and is clearly not imminent, especially in the current financial climate. Section 6 makes some recommendations relating to this



issue, but their effect will be incremental and long-term, rather than swift. However, the management committee made a heartening reflection on this issue when they suggested “*problems create Opportunities for Change!*”

## 6.5 Enhancing Parent and Volunteer Engagement with TYS

- 6.5.1 The challenges faced by TYS in actively engaging parents impact upon the service at a number of levels and have been identified from a number of different perspectives within the review. On the one hand, the fact that parents do not, generally, drive their children to the centre to participate in activities clearly informs the allocation of human resources (basically, staff time) to the delivery of the programme. Coupled with this, the distance which must be travelled, the traffic congestion and the occasional arrival of the bus to a location where no young people are available to be *picked up* does open up serious questions as to the validity of operating the service in this way. Clearly, if more parents were willing to drive their children, if some sort of car pooling arrangement could be put in place, it might be possible for the bus to be used more effectively. If parents were to be more actively engaged, perhaps around specific tasks rather than in a more general way, then a number of the practical issues could be addressed, and, perhaps, volunteering could be enhanced. Again, research carried out by Clarity RDT shows that a person is much more likely to volunteer if they know exactly what they are volunteering for, if they have clear and dedicated lines of communication / support with the organisation and if there is some sort of reward (almost never monetary) and acknowledgement of their role.<sup>6</sup> Of course, there will always be families who will not participate in this type of system. More importantly, there will always be families who cannot, and should not be expected to, participate in this type of initiative and those are the exact families the service should be targeting, not only in ensuring that transport is available and accessible, but in all of the other potential areas identified in section 6.2, above.
- 6.5.2 The engagement of Travellers, the support and development of leadership in the community and the enhancement of opportunities for the community to actively inform the ways in which policy and practice is developed both locally and nationally, is a key principle of STAG and has, in the view of the management and the community, contributed to its sustainability and success since its establishment in 1984. Surely, again, this is a very firm foundation on which to build and facilitate a conversation relating to targeting services and supports where they are most needed. Essentially, this conversation – with parents, the community in general and funders – would need to focus on the very clear distinction between the concept of *equity*<sup>7</sup> and the concept of *equality*, the former being a clear step on the journey to the latter.
- 6.5.3 This might seem like a complex conversation, but really it is not, rather it actually could, potentially, provide opportunities for real leadership development and deal with some of the challenges of ensuring that parents and families are actually involved in decision making, are clear that the a service which is attempting to meet the expectations of everyone, might not, in real terms, be meeting the very real needs of some. Could attempting to have this conversation, using the very tangible community development model implemented by STAG result in the amelioration of community concerns and expectations, around *branding* particular families and young people and build the

<sup>6</sup> Irish Guide Dogs for the Blind (2007) – Organisation Learning Document – The Practice of Supporting Volunteers (Clarity RDT, Cork)

<sup>7</sup> *Equity* of approach (justice resulting from fairness in relation to distribution - actions, treatment of others, or a general condition characterised by justice, fairness, and impartiality) is a step on the journey to *Equality* (the quality or state of being equal – in relation to rights, treatment, quantity of distribution)



community expectation that parents *who can, do* on behalf of their own children and with some sense of the broader impact of these actions.

6.5.4 The decision as to whether or not to engage in this conversation as part of the TYS journey is one which can only be made by TYS and its parent organisation. Clearly, there is no need for a fundamental shift in principle or core objective, rather what is required, and what seems to be apparent, is the courage to be open to the significant challenge of taking on this piece of work. This is where support, expert guidance, professional development, networking and collaboration come to the fore, as they should afford opportunities for modeling this type of approach. Lastly, all youth services (and community development projects) that Clarity has worked with over the past five years have to deal with high expectations, assertions of clientalism (or being a *clique*), of not meeting all of the needs of a particular community of interest and geography. The challenge is to acknowledge that this is part of the territory, continue to attempt to have as broad a range of voices informing service and support developments and initiatives and to be very clear as to the reasons for particular actions and approaches. Of course, this is difficult when dealing with the Traveller community who consistently and constantly (we meant to use those two words) have to deal with very basic human rights issues on a practical, daily basis and there are no *quick fixes*. The recommendations in section 7 might merely provide a starting point for the service and STAG to move forward on these complex issues.

## 6.6 Specific Programme/Service Gaps Identified

6.6.1 Whilst the previous sections were relatively complex both structurally and conceptually, in this section we simply name the service gaps identified by review participants in terms of the TYS programme. Table 3, below, outlines these.

6.6.2 We framed this section in a table for two main reasons. Firstly, the team can use it as a poster in their room when they are designing new programmes (and the young people really wanted their activities, Play station, X box and Wii to stand out from the other identified gaps). Secondly, and much more importantly, the gaps identified when seen together clearly indicate an acknowledgement of the need for the development of the service on the part of all stakeholders. In many ways, these lists should inform the new work plan and fit quite snugly with the issues identified elsewhere in this section. All of the groups looking at the issue of programme/provision gaps – apart from the parents and young people – named the importance of parental involvement and the development of opportunities for supported and structured volunteering roles to be taken on by the community.

6.6.3 Clearly, the gaps identified by the young people are focused around their particular enjoyment of certain activities and their wish to see more of those particular types of activities included in the programme. Our *fisherman* clearly felt that the more often he said the word *fishing* the more likely we were to include it on the list. On a deeper level, however, the young people were very clearly identifying the fact that some of the activities should just afford them an opportunity to relax. Most youth centres now have electronic games like the ones identified, especially the ones with *chill out zones* and squashy couches.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> *Squashy Couch* is a particularly interesting project in Waterford city which used what is often termed the *chillax* approach to supporting young people to deal with particular sexual and mental health issues by making a space available for young people to gather and providing skilled youth workers to facilitate what are essentially unstructured engagements. *Youthlinks Knocknaheeny*, in addition to a myriad other youth services and supports, provides a Friday night and Sunday afternoon drop in for local young people where they are encouraged to hang out – rather than gather in groups on the streets – on black leather sofas, drink tea, eat and chat. Again, qualified youth workers facilitate these unstructured sessions which provide pathways for young people to access the more targeted initiatives available through the centre. We only name two examples here, but this approach has become a key element of youth service and support practice throughout Ireland, the UK and Europe over the past ten years.



- 6.6.4 Parents were particularly concerned around the gaps in provision specifically designed to meet the very separate needs of boys and girls and were in agreement with the young people that a wider variety of activities should be made available. Clearly, they also enjoyed seeing their children perform at the various events and wished for enhanced opportunities to do so.
- 6.6.5 The staff /volunteer team identified the relative high cost of providing horse riding and its importance and cultural significance to the Traveller young people. Also, they were acutely aware of the current gaps around meeting the needs of the younger age group – as were the parents, management committee and advisory group to a greater or lesser extent. Enhancing opportunities for the team to improve their skillset and developing opportunities for professional development was also named. As stated previously, the team were also acutely aware of the need for targeted interventions, but were challenged in this regard by issues such as community expectation, parent involvement and the resources constraints placed upon the service by the need for the *rota* system within their geographical remit. Finally, the team were aware of the need to continually support funding agencies to acknowledge the age range issues facing the TYS.

**Table 3: Specific Programme / Service Gaps Identified**

Young People	Parents	Team	Mgmt. Committee	Advisory Group
More Horse Riding	Wider variety of activities	Funding to enhance culturally appropriate activities	Movement towards redefining youthwork within the context of Traveller culture	Additional programme level work in relation to education
More Swimming	Inclusion of younger children in summer projects	Resources to work with 6 – 9 yr. olds	Engaging young Traveller men	Enhanced networking in order to proactively ensure Travellers are included in mainstream provision – for example, breakfast clubs etc.
Fishing	Specific programmes for teenage girls – hip hop, hair and beauty, photography, trips	Specifically targeted initiatives / programmes	Initiatives to deal in a culturally appropriate way with sexual health	Enhanced parental involvement in the service
Overnight Trips	Programmes for Traveller men (15 – 21)	Enhanced staff training and professional development opportunities	Dealing with age range issue	Mobile recreational facilities – dormant accounts (?)
Longer Summer Project	Events with Entertainment	Thinking around issues relating to geographical remit, <i>rota</i> system	Co-ordination of response to needs of young person in order to more actively engage with the family	Specific programme responses to mental health issues and suicidality within the Traveller community
Separate Camping Trips for Boys and Girls	TYS Disco	Increased understanding and acknowledgement of funders around cultural issues and the use of resources		Health programme specifically for girls
<b>Wii</b>		Enhanced parent support, involvement and volunteering on the programme		Development of opportunities for young Traveller work placement
<b>Play Station</b>				
<b>X-Box</b>				



- 6.6.5 For the management committee, developing pathways for leadership were of particular concern, and re-iterated the parent's and team's concerns around the issues facing young men. They also named as a gap the need for culturally appropriate sexual health programmes. In addition, they agreed with the team – although used different terminology – around the fact that TYS is and could continue to redefine youthwork provision and practice in relation to Travellers. They also named networking with mainstream youth service provision as a particular gap, but in tandem named the particular challenges facing TYS in this regard.
- 6.6.6 The advisory agreed almost completely with the management committee in many of their identified gaps, but saw increased networking, specific programmes to deal with issues such as mental health and suicidality as particularly important. In addition, they made particular reference to the role of TYS in enhancing the potential of participants to actively engage with mainstream education and localised youth facilities.

## 6.7 Closing Remarks

- 6.7.1 As stated at the beginning of this section, TYS is considered by all to be a quality service that really is on the journey towards becoming a model of good practice which has the potential to *redefine youth work* in relation to Travellers. Everything is in place for the next stage of the journey to begin. In the next section we take each of the issues identified above and provide a series of interconnected recommendations which are designed to facilitate TYS in moving on to the next stage of this journey.



## 7 Recommendations Moving Forward

### 7.1 Opening Remarks

7.1.1 In this section, we provide a series of recommendations designed to support TYS, STAG and its key partners and stakeholders to collectively respond to the issues raised within the context of this review process. It is important to note at the outset that these recommendations will not, and should not, be considered to be *quick fixes* as they attempt to deal with what the very complex issues facing the organisation in moving forward on its journey. The journey to the current programme and structures, which should act as a solid foundation for the implementation of the recommendations below has taken five years, and this does not include the twenty years work which STAG had engaged in prior to the establishment of TYS. There is no reason why the implementation of the recommendations should not take another five years. After that, another point on the journey should be reached and another review process may be required to identify the next steps.

7.1.2 Of course, the current economic environment – and its impact moving forward – will also inform the implementation of the recommendations, the continuation of the journey. In resource limited times, however, targeting becomes more important than ever, effectiveness is measured more closely and organisations taking a strategic approach to their development are, as a consequence, more likely to flourish. If one looks back to the most recent examples of situations of resource limitation in the mid to late 1980's, some of the very programmes and initiatives that support communities to this day were initiated. For example, during this particularly difficult time, Area Partnership companies were established to, initially, develop a more co-ordinated response to the needs of targeted geographical communities experiencing the worst consequences of multi-generational unemployment, educational disadvantage and service and support deficits. The Community Development Programme also emerged during this time to build the capacity of communities of interest and geography to more actively engage with the decision making processes affecting their individual and collective quality of life. Thus, whilst we must be highly aware of the constraints placed upon developing organisations like TYS by the current economic environment, we must not let that prevent TYS and others from making bold statements, from developing ambitious strategic and business plans and from continuing to envision an Ireland where Traveller young people are supported to achieve not only their potential and leadership, but are also supported to access services of excellence designed to meet not only their broad needs, but also their very specific and targeted ones.

7.1.3 Thus, clearly, TYS needs a dedicated facility (with couches and electronic games and café type facilities and trained youth workers to facilitate pathways) from which to grow its service and with shifts in thinking to increase access, clearly the numbers have the potential to be excellent – where that facility would be located is almost as significant a challenge as where the resources for its delivery would come from. TYS needs at least another community bus and at least another four licensed bus drivers – again, a challenging and resource heavy need. TYS needs to be supported to work with the under 10's, but funding streams are currently designed around a set of criteria which are completely inappropriate to the specific cultural needs of the Traveller community. These are not unrealistic resourcing needs, and if these resources were made available, they would be managed appropriately and well. We have included them here as concrete evidence has emerged from the review as to the organisational need for them and the proficiency of STAG/TYS to manage them, should opportunities to access them become available. Finally, we would recommend that TYS, in partnership with STAG, develop a specific strategic and business/implementation plan in relation to



the recommendations outlined below. Also, can TYS just please buy a TV and an Electronic Games Console *please!*

7.1.4 It is our view that the service provision gaps identified and the need to enhance volunteering and parental involvement in TYS are covered under the four sets of recommendations outlined below.

## 7.2 Recommendations Relating to the Rota System and Access

7.2.1 Clear evidence emerged in the review process that the current operation practice of offering the service on a rota system to young people throughout the geographical area covered by the service is having an effect on TYS's potential for increased impact. Given that impact – under the current system – has been clearly recognised by all participants in the review process, this issue needs to be addressed. Therefore, if this system is to remain in place, even in the short term as developmental work is carried out to facilitate TYS to add value to its already existing operational structure through additional, more targeted programmes, we recommend the following:

1. **The Rota System and Access** should become a **Strategic Priority Action Area** within the context of the development of a Five Year Strategic Plan for TYS;
2. Increased emphasis is placed upon identifying additional community members to act as bus drivers and providing them with access to achieving the required licensing;
3. STAG should use its considerable linkage with the various integrated networks throughout its area to support TYS to gain access to an already existing community bus and driver as work to identify and train additional community members to act as bus drivers is ongoing;
4. TYS (in partnership with STAG) should develop a specific and focused volunteer recruitment, support and supervision programme, with clear role descriptions to encourage additional community volunteering. In tandem with this, STAG should approach the local volunteer bureau to assess the feasibility of accessing an already existing group of volunteers to support the implementation of the TYS programme;
5. Increased emphasis is placed upon encouraging and **expecting and challenging** parents to operate a *car pooling* system which will afford the opportunity for TYS to operate within more than one geographical location at a time;
6. Increased emphasis is placed upon accessing locally based facilities from which to operate particular elements of the programme – within this context, it must be borne in mind that one of the key *selling points of the service* identified by the young people in their choice to access TYS was the fact that *it get's me off the site for a while* and, therefore, it will be important that TYS use their significant local knowledge to create opportunities for young people to move from their community of origin, meet other children from different locations and access an *actual* youth facility, rather than a room in a generic community building. Moving forward on this will require ensuring that recommendations relating to continuing to develop the service and developing opportunities to increase the professional youth focused expertise available to TYS are moved forward;
7. A funding submission is developed for Dormant Accounts, RAPID Additionality and other identified funding sources for the purchase, fit out and staffing of a *TYS Mobile Youth Facility*



which can be brought to particular locations around the area to provide localised, developmental youth programmes;

8. Within the context of the 2009 / 2010 work plan (should a strategic plan not emerge) – specific reference should be made to increasing the level of access to the service from a comparative 25% to 40% as a result of the implementation of the recommendations 1 – 7 above.

### 7.3 Recommendation Relating to the Continuing TYS Journey

7.3.1 With regard to continuing the TYS journey, we have only one core and key recommendation to put forward, as it provides an overall framework within which to deliver upon the rest of our recommendations. Thus, it is:

1. STAG Management agree to the development of additional, specifically targeted programmes by TYS on the basis of the evidence of need brought forward in this review. Agreement to this does not on any level require a shift in principle or vision by the organisation, but rather it requires the acknowledgement at a management level of the specific challenges faced by particular individuals and groups of TYS participants at certain times and within certain contexts. It will, however, require the organisation to actively support the TYS in dealing with the expectations and concerns of the community in moving towards this type of provision.

### 7.4 Recommendations Relating to Developing the Expertise Available to TYS

7.4.1 Again, clear evidence emerged in the review of the availability and readiness of TYS to build upon its already considerable expertise in working with Traveller young people and in delivering culturally appropriate programmes which – within their limitations – are designed to meet the needs of their particular target group. The following recommendations are designed to support the organisation in developing that already considerable expertise through already existing support structures and networks.

1. The re-alignment of the role of the Youth Advisory Group to become a sub-group of the STAG Management Committee in order to enhance opportunities for the development of the expertise of TYS. Structurally, and in terms of ensuring the continued overall management role of the STAG Management Committee and STAG Manager, the following seems appropriate:
  - a. Agreement at management committee level for the establishment of a formal Youth Service Sub-Group
  - b. Agreement of the following sub-group membership structure
    - *STAG Chairperson*
    - *2 Board Members*
    - *Current Advisory Group Members and additional members if deemed appropriate)*
    - *STAG Manager*
    - *TYS Co-Ordinator (Also to provide administrative and logistical support to the sub-group)*
  - c. Agreement of the following role description
    - *Members commit to meet monthly for 2 hours for an initial period of one year*
    - *To support and endorse the development of TYS Strategic Plan on the basis of the outcomes of the It's the Bestest*
    - *To support and endorse the development of the TYS Annual Work Plan*



- *To provide professional guidance and support to STAG in the design, development and delivery of the broad and targeted programmes*
  - *To enhance opportunities for TYS to engage in collaborative work with other youth service providers in the area*
  - *To support the identification of funding opportunities and the development of specific, youth focused funding applications in line with the TYS strategic plan*
- d. Agreement of the following reporting arrangements
- *To make recommendations to the Board on the key role elements outlined above*
  - *Financial decision making will remain the responsibility of the STAG management committee*
  - *Overall management and reporting responsibility for the work of the TYS will remain with the STAG management committee*
2. The design, development and implementation of a specific external support and supervision programme – linked with the already existing management and support structure available from STAG – to the TYS Co-Ordinator, with the aims of;
- a. *Developing the already considerable professional capacity of the team and identify the specific youth work training needs of the team;*
  - b. *Developing the professional creativity of the service;*
  - c. *Providing external, professional support and supervision around the design, development and implementation of a series of programmes to target in the first instance:*
    - i. *Issues relating to sexual health*
    - ii. *Issues relating to mental health*
    - iii. *Girls' Programme (15+)*
    - iv. *Boys' Programme (15+)*
3. The timely implementation of the already existing plan to develop a parents association for TYS;
4. The implementation of an annual networking event, hosted by TYS in September each year, to which representatives (at all levels – management and staff teams) of other youth service organisations, school completion programmes and other youth focused initiatives operated within the geographical area covered by TYS will be invited and to facilitate specific information sharing on planned programmes and events with the aim of enhancing collaborative opportunities;
5. The presentation of the outcomes of the external review by the TYS Co-Ordinator to the following inter-agency structures (in the first instance) to ensure that each has a real and meaningful understanding of the work of the service and of its plans moving forward:
- a. the RAPID Youth Task Group
  - b. Southside Partnership Youth at Risk and Traveller Education Networks
  - c. Inter-Agency Steering Group for Travellers

## **7.5 Recommendations Relating to Age Range and Cultural Appropriateness**

7.5.1 Similarly to section 7.3, above, in this regard we have only one recommendation as it is linked clearly with the implementation of other recommendations contained above and below. Thus, we recommend:



1. The development of a specific submission relating to the issue of age range to all current funding organisations – using the outcomes of the review as a baseline, perhaps, in addition to other existing materials. In this regard, the advisory group (or Youth Sub-Group, if agreed), could be helpful in supporting TYS to follow up on this submission.

## **7.6 Closing Remarks**

- 7.6.1 There is no doubt that the recommendations outlined above are ambitious. Clearly they are, but ambition seems important and given the rapid development of TYS since its development, its significant success in achieving its core objectives and working towards the achievement of the core objectives of STAG, they are SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and timescaled). In our view they provide the core of a TYS Strategic Plan and if taken incrementally should support the TYS journey to continue.



## 8 Closing Remarks

- 8.1 Throughout the course of this document we have sought to be true to hopes and challenges expressed by all participants in the review process, our aim in all our work being to accurately reflect the views expressed to us and to then use those words to develop strategic and developmental recommendations in a spirit of solidarity with the aspirations and values of our client organisations. Thus, the young people provided a baseline for us in this regard. Their energy, confidence and laughter have stayed with us throughout the process and we are glad we met them.
- 8.2 In terms of the outcomes of the review process, often challenging for any organisation, TYS and STAG can be confident that their commitment to developing a youth service has paid off, clearly, the last five years have been sometimes challenging, issues and concerns have been raised, but the results come through very starkly in this document. The service is respected and acknowledged – by the young people, their parents and funders, and would seem to be ready to move forward, albeit in challenging, resource limited times.
- 8.3 Our recommendations have been mainly structural in that they have sought to support TYS to put in place the programmes, parental involvement and professional expertise they need to move forward. Again, a youth facility is required, more staff and volunteers would always be helpful (both would be well managed as the review has evidenced). Clearly, however, the creativity of the team, management and advisory group has the potential to meet these needs, if not immediately, then over a period of time.
- 8.4 Finally, we have enjoyed working with TYS, they have been supportive, open and flexible – all of which are always basic requirements for the delivery of a review process. We hope this report provides some ballast against the prevailing winds of the economic climate and we trust that the wisdom of targeting, of building on what's already there and of supporting the development of initiatives which seek to improve the quality of life of the Traveller community in Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown, as well as throughout Ireland, is not lost.



## APPENDIX 1

### Southside Travellers Action Group (STAG) and the Traveller Youth Service (TYS): A Summary Overview

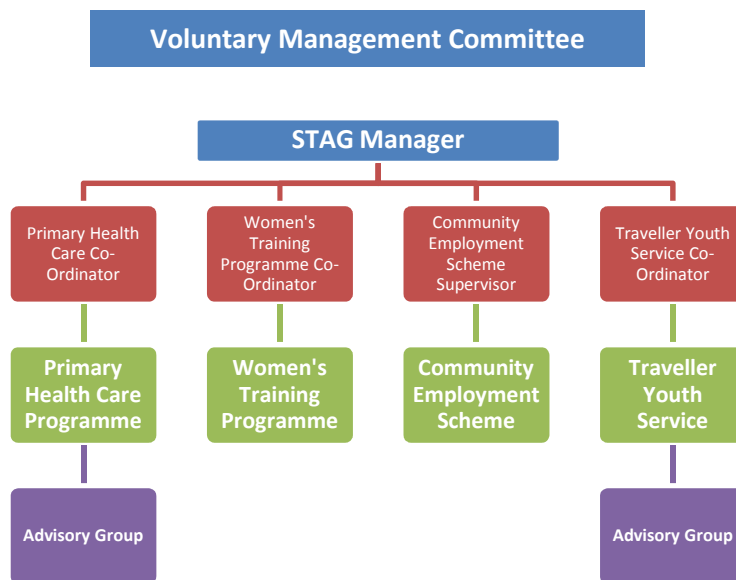
The purpose of this appendix is to provide an overview of the Traveller Youth Service (TYS) and its parent organisation Southside Travellers Action Group (STAG). Below, we provide more detail – including a current participant profile – of the TYS, given that it is the focus of this document. The work of STAG, however, provides a significant backdrop and support structure for the ongoing development of the TYS and therefore requires some analysis within the context of the review.

#### 2: Southside Travellers Action Group (STAG)

STAG started life as South Dublin Travellers’ Support Group in 1984 as a response to attempts to prevent Travellers from camping beside Foxrock Church. Since those early days, the organisation has grown, and has since been granted Community Development Project status by the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs<sup>9</sup>. In 2005, STAG moved to its current resource centre premises in St. Kieran’s Enterprise Centre in Sandyford Industrial Estate. Now currently employing over twenty people in its Women’s Training Programme, Primary Health Care Programme, Traveller Youth Service and Community Employment Scheme, STAG’s mission statement asserts the core role of the organisation, which is to:

*“Build a strong, Traveller led community development organisation with adequate resources in order to promote the rights of Travellers in the Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown area”*

The diagram, below, summarises the organisation’s structure, which is overseen by a voluntary management committee comprising a significant number of Traveller representatives.



Through its various programmes, STAG provides support, training and development opportunities for members of the Traveller community within its geographical remit which covers the administrative area of Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County Council. The following strategic aims inform the work of the organisation:

<sup>9</sup> For more information, see **The Southside Traveller: Southside Travellers Action Group Celebrating 20 Years of Action** available from STAG for a detailed history of the organisation.



1. To build an effective and accountable organisation with strong Traveller participation at every level that will maintain the principles of community development
2. To develop and implement culturally appropriate Traveller programmes in Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown and to promote awareness of, and respect for, Traveller distinct identity amongst both settled and Traveller communities
3. To network in solidarity with existing and new groups and to campaign, lobby, network and create policies that address and challenge the inequality identified and experienced by Travellers

Within this context, STAG focuses on five priority action areas, namely:

1. Accommodation
2. Education and Training
3. Health
4. Youth
5. Employment and Enterprise

### 3: STAG Traveller Youth Service (TYS)

The TYS has been operated by STAG under contract from County Dublin / Dun Laoghaire - Rathdown Vocational Education Committee since early 2004. Located in the STAG Resource Centre in Sandyford Industrial Estate, the service employs six staff, namely:

- 1 Full-time Co-Ordinator
- 5 Part-time Youth Workers (2 of whom are employed under the FAS Community Employment Scheme)

Staffing for the service is augmented with a combination of volunteers, students on placement or Garda interns. It is important to note that all staff are trained youth workers with varying levels of specific qualifications, all are Garda vetted and the five part-time staff are also members of the Traveller community. Thus the service operates within the context of good practice whilst maintaining an ethos of supporting communities members to gain meaningful qualifications for employment.

Working with young people from throughout the geographical area of Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown, the service offers a mixed programme for Traveller young people aged ten to eighteen years who are resident on the eleven halting sites in the area, in group housing schemes, on the roadside or in mainstream housing. Given the geographical area covered, and its commitment to providing services to all Traveller young people within this, the service is primarily operated in rotation in particular locations throughout that area. On the basis of the participant profiling exercise carried out for the purposes of this evaluation, at time of reporting, over 100 young people currently participate in the service.

With the broad aim of *building Traveller Youth self confidence by creating a strong Traveller Youth Service to support and empower individual Traveller young people through culturally appropriate activities* and operating under the strategic aims of STAG, the objectives of TYS are:

1. To establish and develop relationships with young Travellers
2. To provide both educational and fun activities for Travellers in the Dun Laoghaire – Rathdown area
3. To promote integration between the Traveller and settled community
4. To provide a service that supports and helps Traveller young people to combat barriers they face on a daily basis
5. To provide a forum for young Travellers to develop their responses to issues of concern to them

TYS provides a broad, activities based programme on a rotational basis to young people living on the eleven halting sites, the group housing schemes, settled accommodation and roadsides. Staff of the service collect



young people from their home places and bring them to the centre or other centres to participate in weekly programme activities which include:

- Horse Riding
- Computers
- Media Skills
- Cookery
- Art Activities
- Handball
- Dance Classes
- Summer Programmes
- Christmas Events
- Open Nights

In addition, TYS also provides specific programmes such as *Video man*, a project within which young people created, performed in and recorded their own DVD. In addition, staff provide individual one to one support to young people and their families experiencing particular difficulties in relation to education, peer relationships and drugs for example. Young people are encouraged to identify specific programme elements they would like to see included. In any one week, the service can work with up to sixty young people.

