DÁIL ÉIREANN

AN COMHCHOISTE UM SHAINCHEISTEANNA RÍTHÁBHACHTACHA A THÉANN I GCION AR AN LUCHT SIÚIL

JOINT COMMITTEE ON KEY ISSUES AFFECTING THE TRAVELLER COMMUNITY

Dé Máirt, 17 Nollaig 2019

Tuesday, 17 December 2019

Tháinig an Comhchoiste le chéile ag 11 a.m.

The Joint Committee met at 11 a.m.

Comhaltaí a bhí i láthair / Members present:

Teachtaí Dála / Deputies	Seanadóirí / Senators
Joan Collins,	Jennifer Murnane O'Connor,
Marcella Corcoran Kennedy,	Lynn Ruane,
Gino Kenny,	Fintan Warfield.
Éamon Ó Cuív.	

I láthair / In attendance: Senator Martin Conway.

Seanadóir / Senator Colette Kelleher sa Chathaoir / in the Chair.

The joint committee met in private session and resumed in public session at 11.10 a.m.

Traveller Employment: Discussion (Resumed)

Chairman: I welcome members and viewers who may be watching proceedings on Oireachtas TV to this meeting of the committee. The purpose of today's meeting is to continue our deliberations on the topic of employment and how it impacts the Traveller community. This will be our second session on this subject, and we will examine the disproportionate levels of unemployment among Travellers. I welcome those in the Public Gallery as well. We have been looking at many different aspects of this issue, and we want to paint a picture of the situation based on Traveller voices, perspectives, and lived experiences. We are also seeking to generate recommendations on how it could be different. We started our public work in September and since then we have met at least 50 people and received as many submissions and more. We have a huge body of work, which we are anxious to ensure is captured in our report. Time is of the essence for us. Last week, Mr. T.J. Hogan from Mincéirs Whiden told us that five and six year old Traveller children in primary school are not asked what they want to be when they are older. The expectations are lowered even before they begin. We were also told about the 80% rate of unemployment among Travellers and the prejudice they face in accessing employment. Good, capable people must hide their identities and give fake addresses just to get past an employer's front door and get a job. We will hear more about that today. I will not repeat the statistics because the witnesses' presentations include plenty of them, as well as real life lived experiences.

I welcome Mr. Bernard Joyce from the Irish Traveller Movement back again. He has put enormous effort into this process. We realise that participating in these committee meetings puts Traveller organisations under pressure, and our report will reflect and reward that participation. I acknowledge that because much work goes into these submissions. I met Mr. Hugh Friel, men's health and development worker in the Donegal Travellers Project, in Mayo earlier this year. I also welcome Mr. Kyle Quill, youth worker from Donegal Travellers Project; Ms Joanna Corcoran from the Galway Traveller Movement; Ms Doreen Carpenter and Mr. Oein De Bhairduin, who I know rather well, from Clondalkin Travellers Development Group; and Ms Brigid Quilligan and Mr. Michael McCarthy from Kerry Travellers Health Community Development Project. As well as the issues we are here to discuss, we will also hear many good examples of what could be possible if we were active about tackling unemployment among Travellers.

I draw the attention of witnesses to the fact that by virtue of section 17(2)(*l*) of the Defamation Act 2009, they are protected by absolute privilege in respect of their evidence to the committee. They are directed that only evidence connected with the subject matter of these proceedings is to be given and they are asked to respect the parliamentary practice to the effect that, where possible, they should not criticise or make charges against any person, persons or entity by name or in such a way as to make him, her or it identifiable. Members are also reminded of the long-standing parliamentary practice to the effect that members should not comment on, criticise or make charges against a person outside the Houses or an official either by name or in such a way as to make him or her identifiable. Mobile phones interfere with the recording

system so they should either be turned off or put into flight mode.

Any submissions or opening statements made to the joint committee will be published on the committee's website after this meeting. After the presentations there will be questions from members of the joint committee. I call on Mr. Bernard Joyce to make an opening statement.

Deputy Joan Collins: I apologise but I will have to leave at approximately 12.20 p.m.

Chairman: We can try to bring in the Deputy first with the questions. She often waits very patiently.

Mr. Bernard Joyce: This is my third time before the committee and, as director of the Irish Traveller Movement, I welcome the committee's examination of Traveller employment. As a community we have played a significant role within the economy over many generations, if not centuries, through markets, trade, including trade in horse ownership, music, arts and labour on farms, as well as being social entrepreneurs. When recycling was not fashionable, Travellers were frowned on by the vast majority of the population for their recycling of goods and materials. It is now highly regarded. Travellers are the social entrepreneurs of Ireland and have played a significant role in this regard.

A recent survey carried out by the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission, IHREC, indicated that 83% of the general population said they would not employ a Traveller. That is very disturbing and worrying. As a community, we are ten times more likely than white Irish to experience discrimination in Ireland, and the discrimination is far higher in the hospitality sector, where Travellers are unable to even get beyond the front door to access services. Like all the other social determinants of our lives, our opportunity for economic security and progression has a deep effect on our life opportunities and is a significant contributing factor to poverty, mental health issues and exclusion. The natural instinct for all of us is to strive to become better and remove ourselves from the chains of poverty. We work harder at times for less.

My colleagues will today articulate these matters better than I can but it is a national disgrace that 80% of Travellers are unemployed at a time of economic success. I do not just want to focus on these matters; we now need to ensure progression towards economic stability for the Traveller community. There is a need for significant commitment from the Government if Travellers are to fully experience quality of life and benefit from wealth at a time of economic success, where the description is "full" employment. It is vital that our community is facilitated in sharing the benefits of increased wealth. It is no longer a question of just surviving as we want to strive and achieve.

There are 13 actions towards employment and the Traveller economy within the national Traveller and Roma inclusion strategy. Seven of these come under the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection but there is no executive lead within the Department where those actions should be ring-fenced and driven as part of a specific strategy. The inclusion strategy's action No. 25 relates to youth in particular, and it requires the development of targeted initiatives to increase Traveller and Roma engagement with employment and training. None of the youth-related actions is segregated by Travellers and Roma and it is not proposed to report on this regularly.

In Ireland's country report to the EU Commission under the Youth Guarantee, no data were provided on Travellers but they represent the largest unemployment group, *pro rata*, in the country and they are the earliest school leavers. These people are a significant cohort for target-

ing within the Youth Guarantee but no specific monitoring is undertaken due to the lack of an ethnic identifier. The Department also reports that the "mainstream indicators used to monitor unemployment and labour market changes are detailed in Pathways to Work." However, Travellers are not specifically targeted or named in the Pathways to Work strategy.

Within the social inclusion and community activation programme, SICAP, for 2018 to 2022, led by the Department of Rural and Community Development, there are aims to reduce poverty and promote social inclusion and equality in Ireland through supporting communities and individuals using community development approaches, engagement and collaboration. In its last report at the end of 2018 it noted: "Only a small proportion of the LCGs primarily targeted members of Roma (less than1%) and 3% of Travellers. The difficulty in identifying and engaging with these groups was reported by the Local Development Companies (LDCs) and continues to be one of the key challenges of the programme. Travellers, members of new communities and Roma were the least engaged groups in training, volunteering and employment by the SEs". Some 52% of Travellers on the SICAP case load in 2018 were placed on a course, yet only 3% in 2018 progressed into employment. This is with a budget of €39 million.

The task force report recommendations of 1995 said that the public service should take a lead in the recruitment of Travellers in the mainstream labour force in Ireland. There are 31 local authorities and funding for local government is provided mainly by the Government as well as the local property tax. There are approximately 27,188 employed by all local authorities in Ireland. Dublin City Council is the largest employer with 5,330 staff. There are 304,000 people employed across the public service. Surely there are opportunities for employment there. "Opening Pathways to Employment for Travellers in South Dublin County Council" from March 2006 to March 2017 developed a model that can be replicated in public sector bodies. Overall, the State has not established a national Traveller employment strategy to look at the innovative and ring-fenced programmes needed to reduce Traveller unemployment in a time of economic success. There is no strategy in place to oversee this, yet there are employment opportunities that could be delivered in public bodies.

I am happy to address questions from members of the committee and to draw on the submission and recommendations we sent to the committee.

Mr. Hugh Friel: Mr. Joyce mentioned the unemployment rate of 83% to 84% in the Traveller community. It is disgraceful in my community. I will speak about the rural perspective of Donegal, where I come from. Sometimes at national level the rural areas can be forgotten in terms of transport and other matters. Donegal Travellers Project has been running for the past 20 years. Like me, the majority of the Traveller community, approximately 94%, is employed in Donegal Travellers Project. The other 6% of Travellers who are employed outside the Donegal Travellers Project have low paid jobs. Two of them, my son and a lady, are employed in the HSE. The other few jobs are low end jobs where they must hide their identity or not identify themselves as Travellers.

The population of Donegal is 160,000 and just over 1,200 are individuals in the Traveller community. Outside Letterkenny, there are no members of the Traveller community employed in Ballybofey, Donegal town, Ballyshannon, Bundoran, Killybegs or Buncrana. We talk about changing attitudes in Irish society to the Traveller community and other ethnic and minority groups. Consider the relationship building from the perspective of Travellers taking up public sector jobs. Mr. Joyce alluded to the local authorities. I can speak about that with regard to County Donegal. No Travellers are employed in the local authorities or in social welfare. We talk about SICAP and local development companies which are supposed to be the platform for

funding and leading the way. It is the opposite. They are not leading the way because Travellers are not employed in those sectors, and one cannot dictate to a community about employment and funding when there is nobody employed there in terms of role models.

There were no advocates 20 years ago in Donegal. It was the settled community, thank God, which came out to the Traveller community and set up Donegal Travellers Project. Twenty years later there are Travellers here who are capable of and educated to advocate on behalf of Travellers for employment. The social change within the community has been transparent. There is a percentage of Travellers who need the handholding mechanisms to build their skills, ability and confidence to take up employment; whether local authority or public sector jobs or hotel catering, not every employment suits everybody but we need to create the conditions beyond the Traveller organisations. Many Travellers say they are stuck in Traveller organisations because they have the qualifications, the ability and the skills to take up other employment but they do not have the platforms because there is blatant employment discrimination within the public sector. We need to create the conditions for apprenticeships that are transparent throughout the public sector. Is it not quite disgraceful that there is not one member of the Travelling community in the staff? That shows the blatant racial profiling of Travellers within the employment sector. They cannot take up employment or if they have taken it up they have to hide their identity.

The mental health and self-esteem of young Travellers is zero. They have no ambition because there is no ambition in the State or the community to drive people who are social welfare dependent. That is the only light those who are social welfare dependent see in the room because they do not see any other; there is no hall light turned on, only the kitchen light because social welfare is the only benefit they have. They cannot see the light at the end of the tunnel to take up employment. There are no initiatives for those on social welfare. There is jobpath which is a disgrace. It is not creating the conditions for employment for the members of the Travelling community. There is a landscape of work to be done in respect of employment for Travellers. When we talk of transparency we need to look at ourselves and ask what platforms the State is creating for Travellers to take up opportunities.

Chairman: I thank Mr. Friel. That is an interesting list of towns in Donegal where no Traveller has a job and there are huge gaps in local authorities. In the health module we heard people talk about not having doctors. I call Ms Corcoran from the Galway Traveller Movement to make her presentation.

Ms Joanna Corcoran: Galway Traveller Movement made a submission to the committee and believes that addressing the enterprise and employment needs of the Traveller community, my community, should be a matter of priority for the Irish State. Members of my community experience higher levels of unemployment when compared with the settled population. According to the CSO, 2016, the Traveller unemployment rate is 80%. The main barriers currently experienced by Travellers as regards the labour market as well as enterprise activities include discrimination, direct or indirect - half of all Travellers feel that they experience direct discrimination, according to the all-Ireland Traveller health study; lack of appropriate enterprise guidance and support from mainstream enterprise support organisations, and lack of trust among Travellers with traditional business support providers; loss of benefits, or fear of loss of benefits particularly in relation to the medical card, given Travellers' poorer health status than that of the general population. This can mean that Travellers will be fearful of taking up employment or testing new enterprise ideas; lack of visible role models as many Travellers need to hide their identity to succeed in a hostile and anti-Traveller work environment; a national

survey of Travellers in 2017 found that 52% of Travellers said they had experienced an obstacle when accessing employment, and 43% indicated they have encountered discrimination while accessing employment.

Discrimination against Travellers, racism, unemployment and social exclusion have a negative impact on all Travellers - women, men, young people and children. Travellers are not gaining employment from the mainstream State investment in enterprise programmes, foreign direct investment, training initiatives, and local development programmes. There is a national Traveller Roma and inclusion strategy, NTRIS, but there is no additional money or resources attached to the employment and enterprise actions in NTRIS. We fear that the strategy will end in 2021, and there will no improvement in the situation of Travellers in employment. We need to create opportunities for Travellers to gain real jobs. We in the Galway Traveller Movement, GTM, alone have created 16 jobs for members of the Traveller community through our social enterprise activities. Since 2007, GTM has pursued an ambitious enterprise and social enterprise development strategy. We have formed two social enterprises: First Class Insulation which has provided home insulation services in the west of Ireland since 2010 and has delivered the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland, SEAI's better energy warmer homes scheme to more than 1,500 homes; and Bounce Back Recycling which has recycled mattresses in the Connacht and Ulster waste region since 2017. We are one of only three mattress recyclers in the country.

Our social enterprise mission is to explore and expand new social enterprise opportunities in order to increase employment opportunities for Traveller men and women; develop a powerful model of economic self-determination to inspire the wider community; reclaim the community's role in environmental and economic sustainability; and, finally, promote the visibility of our work in order to challenge racism and discrimination. A third social enterprise, Springback Upcycling, which will provide furniture refurbishment and up-cycling services, is at start-up stage.

Our most recent achievements in 2019 include the following. Bounce Back Recycling was nominated for a Green Award 2020 in the green NGO category, the winner of which will be announced in February 2020. A feature on Bounce Back Recycling was broadcast on RTÉ Radio 1's "Today with Sean O'Rourke" on 21 November 2019. The model of Galway Traveller Movement's social enterprise activities, including First Class Insulation and Bounce Back Recycling, was featured as a key contributor and the basis of a workshop at the first National Social Enterprise Conference, organised by the Department of Rural and Community Development on 21 November 2019. Bounce Back was one of 16 national awardees of the Social Innovation Foundation Ireland's Social Enterprise Development Fund Award 2019. Bounce Back is working with the Climate-Kic Accelerator programme with Trinity College Dublin. First Class Insulation, FCI, has successfully tendered for appointment to the panel of SEAI contractors. FCI has delivered the better energy warmer homes scheme to more 1,500 homes in County Galway. We have also developed a model and toolkit for supporting Traveller women entrepreneurs.

We have made recommendations relating to enterprise, employment, social enterprise, and local enterprise strategies based on our experience and track record. We have made some recommendations that apply to all enterprise and employment bodies. It is essential that the needs of Travellers, and other groups, are assessed in preparation for all enterprise and employment programmes so that services will be appropriate to the needs and experiences of members of the Traveller community. This means that Travellers decision-making is part of the decision-

making and planning processes, at local and national level, with State agencies involved in enterprise, employment and labour market support. Equality impact assessment should be mandatory in all policies and actions plans relating to employment and enterprise and Travellers should be involved in this process. All enterprise and employment agencies and bodies must collect data on the participation and access of Travellers in their programmes. To do this they need to introduce an ethnic identifier. Once they have the data, agencies should report and monitor the ongoing engagement of Travellers with their services and take action where there is a low take-up. Anti-racism and cultural awareness training should be mandatory for staff of State agencies and funded bodies. It should not be a one-off process. If the above actions were undertaken, they would support the legal obligations of agencies and bodies under the public sector equality and human rights duty.

Our specific recommendations relating to employment include the following. There should be a positive action programme in the public sector which targets Travellers in recruitment processes. This should be undertaken by the Public Appointments Service with the involvement and partnership of Traveller organisations to support its implementation. Given the significant funding provided by the State to support private enterprises, the State should require private employers in receipt of State supports to put in place strategies and actions to secure a diverse workforce. The State should also put in place resources to support this. The special initiative for Travellers, SIT, aimed to explore approaches to tackling unemployment and underemployment of Travellers and to support Travellers in the Traveller economy. GTM delivered SIT programmes for two years. We were granted a further programme when it was moved from the then Department of Social Protection to the Department of Justice and Equality. However, with this changeover, the funding stream was lost and we were informed that no new calls would be made under the programme. GTM calls for SIT to be reinstated, and for all SIT programmes to be located within Traveller representative organisations.

Regarding Traveller-led social enterprise, we welcome the recent national social enterprise policy and recommend the following actions under its implementation. Key performance indicators and targets must be established under this programme, including targets and strategies for Traveller-led social enterprise. GTM could be funded as a selected organisation to support Traveller organisations on a national basis to explore social enterprise development. We are well placed to do this, and as a result of recent national radio and conference coverage, we are receiving requests for support from Traveller organisations and local development companies.

Given the role of communities in national climate action and renewable energy strategies and the significant role of social enterprises in the green economy, we need a green economy and climate action social enterprise strategy. Communities need greater access to capital infrastructure, such as for enterprise and social enterprise activities, and should be facilitated in acquiring these from State agencies which are disposing of assets. This is already the case in Scotland.

The use of social clauses and social considerations in the procurement process is provided for in the procurement directives, and a pilot to explore how this could work should be developed. GTM has experience of delivering social benefits through the procurement process as it is a community-based provider of the SEAI better energy warmer homes scheme, and it can use its expertise in working with communities to support their take-up of this scheme. We are well placed to participate in such a pilot.

Much support for enterprise development is managed and planned at local levels, through local authorities' local enterprise offices, and is informed by local economic and community

plans, LECPs. For the next round of developing LECPs and local enterprise support, local planning processes must include the formal participation of the most disadvantaged communities, including Travellers. Local structures must give an explicit commitment to this when developing local plans. Unless Traveller organisations are involved, the plans that emerge cannot address the employment and enterprise needs of Travellers. The strategic policy committees for economic development and structures to develop LECPs must have Traveller participation.

Equality of outcome should be a key objective of the LECPs. Reports on the outcomes of the plans must include data on the take-up, outcomes and supports accessed by Travellers. Specific provisions to include the Traveller economy must be part of the LECPs, including making resources available for targeted initiatives to support Travellers. Enterprise supports at local level should be culturally specific and target the engagement of Traveller trainers and mentors. Collaboration should take place with Traveller organisations in designing, delivering and promoting targeted supports and programmes, including enterprise programmes and social enterprises.

Chairman: We have gone a good bit over time. We can read more about Galway Traveller Movement in its submission to the committee. It has truly led the way here and given us much food for thought. That is why I allowed Ms Corcoran to go over time, but I also want to hear from the other witnesses. GTM has had some really practical experience and I congratulate it on its groundbreaking work. It is truly impressive.

I now call Ms Doreen Carpenter from the Clondalkin Travellers Development Group.

Ms Doreen Carpenter: I thank the committee for its invitation to be here today. I work in the Clondalkin Travellers Development Group, CTDG, which was established to address the needs of Travellers in the Clondalkin area. Over time, it has expanded to other areas and now works with Travellers in Lucan, Newcastle and Palmerstown. Almost 8% of all Travellers in Ireland live within the south Dublin area.

CTDG is a partnership between Travellers and the wider community, working to promote the rights of Travellers as a nomadic ethnic group within Irish society, and we seek to address issues through a collective mechanism of work. Historically, both national and local policies have challenged the traditional employment routes and access points for Travellers, either directly through the repression of nomadism, for example, or indirectly through legislation such as the Casual Trading Act, which forced many Travellers, particularly women, out of the labour market due to a lack of appropriate supports. Subsequent State policies and strategies on the stimulation and development of the economy have either been weak or entirely lacking in vision for the inclusion of Travellers in the journey towards a more prosperous Ireland for all children. The barriers to employment for Travellers are a multitude because of the lack of a robust education strategy, the ongoing accommodation crisis, issues regarding the gaps of understanding by institutes and employers of Travellers and the very real fear of the loss of supports such as medical cards.

It has been our experience that many of the Travellers who are in employment outside of Traveller organisations and networks actively conceal their identity to improve their employment possibilities, a strategy that has had many long-term negative consequences for those forced into such practices. Mental health issues and stressors have also continued to challenge the employment possibilities for Travellers. The issues of accommodation, education and health are all linked to employment and underline and undermine progressive strategies and actions aimed at increasing the numbers of Travellers in employment. These factors need

must be taken into consideration - there are multiple levels of discrimination and challenge that Travellers experience daily. In the past there were some particularly successful employment programmes such as South Dublin County Council's employment initiative which created positions in the outdoor duties section of various departments and clerical administration roles. Many of those who took part in the pilot programme progressed to full-time and part-time roles within the council. This was of dual benefit, with the community recognising the importance of council activities and the council creating specific inclusion and access points for Travellers who could be seen not just as clients but also as colleagues.

Currently we run the crossbar bike enterprise training and employment programme, an initiative supported by the Department of Justice and Equality that has created opportunities for Travellers to engage and receive training and certification in City and Guilds bike mechanics and electric bike maintenance. The programme has delivered bike safety training and road safety training in partnership with An Garda Síochána at local schools. It has also created spaces at health fairs; developed local relationships particularly with prison services; engaged young people by providing mentoring and work experience; and has established itself as a repair unit for bicycles as well as a retail unit selling both bikes and bike parts. The programme has been particularly successful as it provides a wide range of wraparound services such as accommodation support, drug and alcohol support and access to a Traveller-specific counsellor. This work is further supported by a steering group that is led in partnership with the community, board of management, local enterprise office and the South Dublin county partnership. Further development of this programme, including seeding it in different regions, would be a positive step towards increasing the employment and engagement of Travellers in different areas. A past participant has now taken over the management of the programme which has sent a strong signal to the Traveller community that programmes such as this can and do work. While the State can encourage private industry and companies to create space for Travellers among their teams and employees, it can also lead by example by creating different positions at appropriate levels in Government Departments and agencies under their remit. This is something that is immediately doable and would lead to a dramatic shift in community relations and understanding and reduce the percentage of Travellers who remain outside of the employment market.

Clondalkin Travellers Development Group supports the specific provisions within the community employment scheme structures that waive the need for 12 months of unemployment in order to access the scheme. In the past this waiver has supported our work and engagement with young Travellers in the context of higher level education, employment exposure and training. Internship programmes could be supported to particularly target bringing Travellers into their structures. Employer exchange programmes could be established, the grandparenting of established skill sets could be considered for different training courses, and cultural awareness training for employers could be made more accessible for employees in order to challenge the pervasive misunderstanding and racism towards Travellers. It is not about ability; it is about ethnicity.

I thank the committee for inviting us here today. I hope our recommendations are taken onboard.

Chairman: I thank Ms Carpenter. I now call Ms Brigid Quilligan from the Kerry Travellers Health Community Development Project.

Ms Brigid Quilligan: On behalf of the Kerry Travellers Health Community Development Project, I thank the Chairperson, Deputies, Senators and Oireachtas staff for the opportunity to present our submission on Traveller employment. My name is Brigid Quilligan and I am a

Traveller woman from Killarney. I am joined by my colleague Mr. Michael McCarthy, a Traveller man from Listowel, who is our men's health worker. We are joined in the Public Gallery by representatives of our community, Ms Nora O'Brien and Mr. Martin Mahon, our vice chair. In solidarity, we are also joined by Ms Hillary Scanlan from the Kerry HSE community work department.

Details of our project's work can be found in our submission. This is our second time before the committee and due to time constraints I ask people to refer to the submission. We come here today with recommendations which if actioned would create meaningful change for our community. On Friday, 6 December we held a county-wide consultation for older Travellers in Kerry. I have been directed by my elders not to ask or seek, but to demand change for our people. I hope we will show honour and respect to our elders and all who paved the way for us today in bringing their voices forward. They would like it to be known that we are a proud, dignified, resourceful, clever and great people. They wish to relay, particularly to our younger generation who are watching this, to never to forget that we have gone out into the world and made a living for hundreds of years, without reading or writing. We have travelled all over the world and been successful, and we can do that in Ireland too with some supports and the removal of some obvious barriers.

Using a social determinants model of health in Kerry Traveller organisations, we see clear health implications associated with poor living conditions, the high levels of exclusion and discrimination faced by Travellers and a lack of opportunities for progression. These issues, experienced to a greater or lesser extent by most Travellers on a daily basis, impact negatively on both mental and physical health. Employment and progression have a major impact on physical and mental health as well. Our organisation has a long track record of supporting local Traveller leadership, further education, mentoring and employment within our own project. We have a diverse cross-cultural team and board, which is Traveller led, though we work in meaningful partnership with others. We also work with education providers and employment services to develop opportunities for Travellers, with Travellers. The thinking and actions around Traveller employment are too small minded, are not ambitious enough nationally and do not reflect a serious approach to supporting an indigenous ethnic minority group with an unemployment rate of 80%. Travellers report being fed up of being on a hamster wheel of consultations, short courses, training courses, or schemes with no meaningful outcomes for individuals or their families. Change is needed.

In our experience, the community is the best judge of what is successful and what changes are needed. If there is an opportunity to make money and have a better life for their families, we can say with authority that Travellers will take it. It is often reported that Travellers do not want to engage in the mainstream workforce, or that we do not want to engage in legitimate self-employment. We challenge this. We have a waiting list of 38 people in our project who regularly contact us actively seeking employment. We also engage with several small business owners who are Travellers who advise us on leadership, business development and social enterprise.

With an unemployment rate of 80% nationally, while we do not have the county breakdown for Kerry, we know in the course of our work that there is a high unemployment level and poverty throughout the county. The largest employer of Travellers in the county is Kerry Traveller Health Community Development Project. On the island of Ireland, we know that Traveller organisations are the largest employers of Travellers. For example, of the 972 Traveller women employed in Ireland in the 2016 census, 400 of them are employed as primary healthcare workers, with approximately 100 women employed as co-ordinators - women like

myself - community development workers, education workers and Traveller workers within Traveller organisations.

Kerry Traveller Health Community Development Project has a health action zone with five Traveller community health workers. We will recruit two more in 2020. This model of training, mentoring, supporting and employing Travellers to deliver services to Travellers is extremely successful. We are supported by the HSE community work department and the Traveller health unit. This funding is ring-fenced nationally and these positions are only available to Travellers, making this an affirmative action programme. This system demonstrates that Travellers in high numbers can be successfully employed if affirmative action programmes were developed across the public sector, the Civil Service and the NGO sector.

A small number of Traveller women in Kerry are employed in social care, home help, as personal assistants, cleaners and shop assistants. A number of Travellers in Kerry own their own business in the areas of market trading, construction, cleaning, catering and the beauty industry. We are highly innovative and resourceful people, very hard-working and with a great work ethic. There is a high value in sole trading and employment in the county. In the county, as happens in all communities, we have people who are doing very well financially and independent of the State and we have people who are experiencing great poverty. In a recent survey conducted by us on the mental health issues among Travellers in Kerry, two relevant findings were that, first, young men aged 17 to 30 are at a loss because of unemployment, leaving them vulnerable to mental health issues and addictions; and, second, poverty and inability to provide basic needs for one's family are cited as the third biggest stress after discrimination and lack of appropriate accommodation.

The factors that affect Traveller participation in the labour market are outlined in detail in our submission. I will name the headings and might give an example. A very basic one is institutional racism and commonplace discrimination that impacts on every Traveller in the country in the areas of health, accommodation, education, employment and social activities. Prejudices, stereotyping and negative generalisations among the general population cause widespread discrimination against us. That has a major impact on the labour market also.

The labour market in rural counties such as Kerry, and I am sure it is the same in Donegal being another isolated county, is very competitive. That puts us at the very end of the barrel. Many Travellers who work as nurses, teachers and solicitors in the county do not reveal their identity. To a degree, these people's employment is secure once they are established in their roles. What is more precarious is the position of unskilled workers such as the cleaners, the people working in factories and shops or those with their own small businesses. They have to hide their identities and tolerate people talking about Travellers as if they are not in the room using the "K" word and making derogatory comments about Travellers. We have case after case, and I have outlined a number of examples in the submission, about people we are supporting who have experienced discrimination in the workplace. Sadly, most of those are young people who are very vulnerable and need support. On their entry into the workplace at work experience they are encountering deep discrimination. That mars their impression of the workforce for the rest of their lives.

The accounts of experiences of discrimination faced when trying to access the job market are too numerous to outline. That is a genuine comment. Anyone of us here today could give members several examples in our own lives of our path here today. I will outline these because they are really important for educators, employers and anybody in positions of power. Three men in our county in the past two years wanted to do apprenticeships. One condition for being

accepted on an apprenticeship programme is having a sponsor. The education provider was brilliant and used personal contacts to try to support the young men. Unfortunately, they could not find sponsors and, therefore, did not qualify for the apprenticeship scheme. None of these men progressed in education. The same thing happened to a young woman. Another example involved a self-employed man who was a fully qualified and experienced roofer and fully tax-compliant. He was asked to leave a job he was about to start. An off-duty Garda in the area went to the house owner and told the house owner that this man was a cowboy and "one of the boys" and would overcharge the householder and do substandard work. This self-employed man has no dealings whatsoever with An Garda Síochána and is a legitimate tradesman but had to leave the premises. There is a stereotype that Traveller tradesmen are con men who rob the elderly and are not legitimate businessmen so Traveller businessmen and businesswomen conceal their identities in large numbers.

There is a disproportionately lower level of attainment in education than in the majority population. Poor outcomes for Travellers over generations have had a devastating effect on their ability to compete in the jobs market based on an applicant's qualifications. Generations of Traveller children have experienced substandard segregated education. Investment in Traveller education is the 1990s saw improvements but cuts in 2009 saw a massive roll-back around that.

Chairman: I am anxious as I want to give members a chance. Are there two things Ms Quilligan wishes to add?

Ms Brigid Quilligan: Our recommendations are that a Department of Traveller affairs needs to be set up. I know we have the national Traveller and Roma inclusion strategy and it is strong but this problem is so significant that we need a dedicated Department with dedicated staff and resources to oversee this plan. This involves working on the areas of health, accommodation, employment, education, equality, culture, history, language and our representation. Our recommendations also include a national employment action plan for Travellers developed in consultation with Travellers; the inclusion of Travellers in mainstream national employment policy such as the national action plan for jobs and Pathways to Work; and education, training, employment and social enterprise with financial remuneration aimed specifically at those aged over 55 in Kerry. Investment is needed to address the inequality of outcomes in Traveller education. Traveller economy and enterprise should be supported to develop building on the strength that already exists in our community. Internships, apprenticeships and traineeships designed to facilitate Traveller culture should be introduced. Barriers in accessing current further education should be addressed. Affirmative action programmes of employment across all Government Departments, the public sector, the Civil Service and publicly funded non-profit organisations should be introduced.

We thank the committee for the invitation to present our story and trust that we will action and change following the committee's deliberations. I will finish by reading a quote from one member of our community in Kerry.

> Your respect and your dignity is everything. That was taken from me and a lot more. We are only numbers. They have completely messed up our young people with this education system. They ask you what you want or need and they do the complete opposite. I'm not wasting any more time telling what I need. A quick look around the cold houses, empty purses, broken-hearted mothers and wives over the drugs, drink and suicide will tell them all they need to know if they care. We have smart people working for us but are ye listened to? No, girleen, ye are not.

Chairman: I thank Ms Quilligan for a very comprehensive and rich submission. I am also conscious that people want to ask questions so I now call on Deputy Joan Collins. I must be strict about giving speakers five minutes each to make sure everybody comes in. If there is a particular person the Deputy wants to direct questions to, could she do so in the interests of hearing from everybody?

Deputy Joan Collins: First, I want to comment on the 80% unemployment rate in the Traveller community. That, in itself, represents a dire failure of the State in dealing with the issue. It is not something that happened overnight. It has been a prevailing attitude right throughout the Departments of State and within my own community - the settled community. When there is 80% unemployment such as in the working class areas I represent of Crumlin and Drimnagh, and areas such as Cabra, if people are unable to access work, their only option is to depend on social welfare or find money somewhere else and do something else to get the few extra bob in one's pocket if one wants to feed one's children, purchase all those basic needs and pay bills. In many ways when the settled community says, "Look at that person on the make" or that they are not accredited, they will do a sub-standard job or they will rob, it is that racism that the State has allowed to develop.

All the submissions that the witnesses put in as groups are positive. They are putting forward ways that we can deal with it. The proposed Department of Traveller affairs is something that we should highlight. The point the Travellers have made from the beginning is: everything with us, not without us. The Traveller input must be included all along the way. It looks as though with all the reports we have had, there has been some input by the Traveller community but in many of them, there was not. That is what we will have to push in the recommendations we make.

It is brilliant the work that the Galway Traveller movement and the Clondalkin Traveller Development Group have done in those enterprises. They are brilliant initiatives but they are not enough. We need targeted ways of developing the skills that the Traveller community has, and can bring into employment. I support every recommendation. I refer to Ms Quilligan and the Kerry Travellers' recommendations. Different ones are crucial.

There are members of the Traveller community over 50 who are not working. How can they be targeted to get back into work? As I said at the previous meeting, I know a number of people who are in that position. They just do not have the confidence, the education and the skills, and the Intreo offices are not supporting them. It is a matter of bringing that down into those Departments to direct those people into employment. Then there are those in their 20s, 30s and 40s who have not been able to get jobs and young people in education for whom it is a matter of ensuring that they get the proper education that they need. We have had hearings on education, social inclusion, etc. I do not have many questions to ask. How can these groups be targeted? It is all there. We have it from the community. We have it from the witnesses saying what needs to be done. I support, in particular, the affirmative action programmes across the public sector. We have done it with disability where one walks into Agriculture House and on every floor one will see somebody in a wheelchair, with a walking stick or whatever working full time and contributing to the workplace. We need that same action throughout the public sector. One seldom sees it in private industry; one mainly sees it in the public sector.

Chairman: Deputy Collins had a question about the over 55s accepting all of the others.

Deputy Joan Collins: And those in their 20s, 30s and 40s.

Ms Brigid Quilligan: I will take the question on the over 55s. It came strongly through our latest consultation where we had a whole room of over 55s stating that there is nothing there for them. The training centres were closed down. Although not ideal, as there was little progression for people, it was something. People now are at a loss. They have nothing. They are at home. Their mental health is suffering. They are living in poverty. They have been completely let down, both in my opinion and their opinion, by the Irish State. They told us they felt very let down. It is about activation programmes, training programmes where there is a little income to lift these people out of poverty, and targeted programmes in consultation with them about what they want to train as and would like to do. That includes social enterprises. One woman relayed that she would like to set up a curtain-making business. Some people would like to set up a market trading enterprise. There are many country markets around the country that people could be supported to get back into.

Mr. Oein de Bhairdúin: We have an opportunity to grandparent established skills into the workforce. We were recently working with a man who wanted to become a farrier. He has worked with horses for his entire life. The process of becoming a qualified farrier is quite a long one but there would be repetition in that he would have to learn things that he already knew. One might look at people who already have skills and ask how one can quicken the pace towards them getting the qualification that they have almost achieved already. That would be very doable.

Chairman: It is recognition of prior learning. I call Senator Ruane.

Senator Lynn Ruane: Significant experience exists within the Traveller community. One should not have to go through an education process to have one's experience and skills recognised. That is an extremely interesting point that I never considered. We should definitely think about and look at that. Whoever feels they want to comment can take this question. I was thinking about the public sector and recommendation No. 8 from the Kerry Travellers Health Community Development Project. Ms Quilligan mentioned the public service, voluntary sector, local authorities and such. I think we are all waiting for those sectors to change internally and suddenly care, and it is as if we have to wait for them all not to be racist for Travellers to apply. What suggestions can we make for affirmative action? There have to be employers in this country who do not feel like that. If they were to say that they are quite happy to employ Travellers, then what do Travellers need if they have been out of employment for a long time or have been burnt by negative experiences before? If an employer was not looking at traineeships or apprenticeships but was just employing Travellers in general, I feel that more work has to happen for Travellers to feel comfortable, welcome and valued by their peers. They should not have to wait for their peers to be ready. What supports can the State provide to employers for a Traveller who may have been out of employment or school for a long time, so that he or she can work for three days a week and the other two can be for development? The expectation of going in from nine-to-five might not be enough for a Traveller to be able to feel comfortable, since he or she might want to upskill. How can the State and employers work together to create a more flexible system?

Throughout the austerity period, there was a middle class coup of jobs that ordinarily we in working class communities or the Traveller community would have had the most access to. There is now a system where we are battling a whole other class of people for the jobs that we always obtained. Is there any sort of analysis of the types of jobs, such as recycling or related to horses, that Travellers would ordinarily have done that have been somewhat taken over? People from the private sector were no longer able to get jobs and came in to this, then started to

demand that people should have a third level degree to do the job they have done for their entire lives. It pushed out people with that local knowledge and understanding of the communities in which they have grown up, lived, worked and provided services. Ms Carpenter and I worked together nearly a decade ago in the community sector and much has changed in the addiction, community and voluntary sector with regard to the expectations of what a person must have on his or her CV to get a job that he or she has been doing for 20 to 40 years. What can be done at a community development level to push back and battle this? We are guilty of not seeing our job as bringing in people who might need a little bit more investment on the way. They might not be job-ready. No one wants to give up time in their working day to invest in people who are maybe younger and entering the workforce for the first time. Everyone says, " That is not my job", so people have to come in with a super-ready skills set and if they do not have that, they are not good enough.

I wonder whether we are failing at community development level. The social inclusion and community activation programme, SICAP, is why we are failing because it is all about job activation. If people are not job-ready, why would anyone invest in the Traveller community in the first place? I do want this to be a PR exercise at that community level and in regard to employers. I never want to see employers or Government bodies, for example, all of a sudden saying they have taken on three Travellers in a Department and then selling it as some sort of "Aren't we great?" exercise. It should not happen quietly but, at the same time, it should not happen in a way that exposes Travellers who are coming into organisations as some sort of charitable exercise. We have a problem in that we have a ruling class in our employment sector who think they know better than the Traveller community and while consultation happens, they say, "We know better, so we will provide this". That came up earlier when someone mentioned that people are ignored when they put the solutions forward. The organisations represented here are putting forward solutions.

Chairman: We used to call it the hamster wheel of consultation.

Senator Lynn Ruane: Exactly. Why is that? It is because they think they know better.

The point about cold houses and empty purses struck me. If that basic need of safety and standard of living is not met, how can anyone be expected to self-actualise in respect of the skills and power they have as a human being? It is important that if we are going to move towards creating spaces where employers start to consider the diversity of their workforce, they also need to understand the living conditions someone is coming from and not put unachievable expectations on them when they are only beginning that process of employment. There are some questions in there somewhere.

Chairman: There is quite a bit in there, Senator, as ever. I call Mr. Friel.

Mr. Hugh Friel: There were a good few questions. First, the quality of outcome for members of the Traveller community is no more than for the settled community in terms of employment. Second, not all Travellers are job-ready. There are different pathways to employment and there are some people at the bottom of the stairs, others in the middle and some at the top. It is a question of how we can create the conditions through community development to get the people from the bottom to the top of the stairs.

The Senator alluded to the point about the local authority and not holding up Travellers, and I point out that we have employed three Travellers. On the platform that needs to be built for the Traveller community, to which Ms Quilligan and others alluded, role models need to be cre-

ated within the community and that has to be transparent throughout the country.

We ran a mental health conference on 15 November, to which I referred in the submission. We had 43 men in attendance, including two settled men who were Traveller workers, one from Sligo and one I brought in from the mental health services to talk about suicide and mental health. I was trying to get them to understand the social determinants and what affects people's health, education, employment and inequality. I asked how many in the room had passed their leaving certificate and only one person said, "Yes". I asked how many had passed their junior certificate and the same person was the only one, and he was sitting beside me. There were four employed, one from Sligo, myself and two of the workers from Donegal Travellers Project out of the 44 people in the room, and nobody else stood up. It was shocking for me to think, on a human level, that this was the case in my community. Even driving the car up this morning, I was thinking how many Travellers are driving to work this morning, given we see thousands of people doing their commute to work every morning. Cultural awareness training and information around the Traveller community are needed because people are sometimes ignorant of these matters and they can be blinded by racially motivated discrimination and a sense that Travellers are inferior to the settled community. The ignorance of people towards Travellers leads to inaccuracies in their perceptions of them. A lot of members of the settled community never meet a Traveller, never engage with a Traveller and never have a conversation with a Traveller. Stereotypical and negative views are portrayed through the media, family resources, friends or associates in the workplace. There is much work to be done on cultural awareness and building relationships. Relationships are crucial to getting to a stage where Travellers who are in employment are not hiding their identity but are proud of who they are. As Ms Quilligan has alluded to, there are Travellers in employment who are hiding their identity. I spoke to a man who is in a high position in his workplace who is hiding his identity and he said his life would be hell if he revealed that he is a member of the Travelling community. He did not want to express that, even though he is as a role model in his profession. There are Travellers who are in the position of role models but they have to hide their identities because of society and recent profiling. I mention the Aboriginals and the Native Americans. We have an overpopulation of Travellers within the prison system. Why is that? We must look at the low levels of attainment in education and employment. People have to buy their bread and butter, as was alluded to. There are a lot of mechanisms that need to be changed and put in gear to change the circumstances and the platforms that exist.

Chairman: One of the big jobs for the committee is to bust those myths and stereotypes. That will be a big part of what the committee does in presenting its key recommendations and proposed actions.

Ms Brigid Quilligan: Norah Casey, the broadcaster and businesswoman, and Leanne McDonagh, the Traveller artist, activist and Cork Institute of Technology, CIT, education worker have set up an organisation that is trying to match employers with Travellers so people can stand out and say they would take such an opportunity on. That is one good initiative that is taking place.

I have been around these tables a long time and I was joking with Mr. McCarthy about this at our staff team meeting. I pointed out we were saying the same thing 20 to 25 years ago. He told me I was repeating myself but I told him I hope he is not here in 25 years saying this same thing to young people. We need to stop taking the crumbs from the table because that is what we are getting. Matching up with employers could have an impact for individuals but if we want a mass impact and if we really want to create change, the State will have to live up to its

duty and take affirmative action for Travellers to redress and address the inequality that exists. The State could do that easily. The primary healthcare programme is a phenomenal success. We need programmes such as that for education, equality, home help and carers. We need that right across the system. We have made that change in the Department of Health and in the Department of Education and Skills there are employers in place already. We have the people ready to go in and train. I have 38 people in Kerry, which is a small county, who would walk into a traineeship or a job today, as some of them are work-ready. That is the tip of the iceberg. We have the people there. We just need the State to meet us halfway.

Chairman: We need an active State.

Ms Brigid Quilligan: We do.

Chairman: We will ask Norah Casey and Leanne McDonagh for a submission. We might not be able to meet them but we would like to hear from them.

Ms Joanna Corcoran: On the issue of bringing Travellers into the workforce, we need to provide them with a safe workspace. One of the recommendations to achieve that was to have a positive action programme in the public sector that targets Travellers in public sector recruitment. If Travellers feel there is a safe space to go into, they will apply for jobs. One way to provide that is to address the issue of hate speech and hate speech legislation and to get that issue sorted in order to ensure Travellers are covered under that. Along with that, actions should be taken to challenge employers. If the challenge is put to the employers on addressing inequalities when it comes to employing ethnic minorities, for example, then we will definitely see change. On the way in which a lot of jobs are advertised, we are seeing some unnecessary entry requirements. I know there are plenty of Travellers who would be able to take on roles but part of getting an interview is having a leaving certificate. Life skills and life experiences are not taken into account, as was gone into a little bit earlier. In a room full of Travellers who have not done their leaving certificate, none of them can apply for that job or will not apply for it because that in itself will put them off. It is one of the recommendations that employers avoid having unnecessary requirements just to apply for a job.

Ms Doreen Carpenter: Our projects work from the principles of community development but even though Travellers are being empowered and have leadership, the barriers they face because of the discrimination are what pulls it down. The community development principle is working; it is the other end of it that is not working, the employers, the racism, discrimination and all that the Travellers face.

Chairman: We heard some very interesting ideas about there being a *quid pro quo* for any company getting money from the State in terms of making the workforce more diverse.

Deputy Marcella Corcoran Kennedy: I thank the witnesses for their contributions this morning. I must say the contributions over the last number of weeks have been very enlightening and will really help inform the recommendations of our report. With every document I read and every contribution I hear, I am thinking about what recommendations to make to ensure that witnesses' voices are heard and that there are actually actions as a result of it. From what I have been hearing over the past number of weeks, the biggest barriers seem to be the racial profiling, stereotyping and institutional racism. The other problem I am hearing is lack of funding.

It strikes me that as a committee, we have to think about the whole approach that any future Government is going to have to take in dealing with this matter. There has to be a whole-of-

government approach and a whole-of-society approach. We have to take that approach because if we do not, there is going to be a certain pocket of money here and a certain pocket of money there; some agencies will be productive and others will not. There was a reference to a gentleman who lost business because a Garda with prejudices allowed those prejudices to influence the fact that he damaged a man's reputation and his opportunity to make a business deal. That would be unacceptable and is unacceptable now. What I am trying to get at is that every single Department would have a proper education system in place and that it would be part of their training, so that they would understand much better the outcome of their actions and understand about racial profiling, stereotyping and the impact they can have. That is one thing. The other thing is around media and how the media report certain things. I am going back to the whole-of-society approach. In third level institutions where people are designing degree programmes, perhaps there should be specific modules for those who are training to work in media, business or whatever, so that there would be a piece there for them and they would learn about all this.

There is something much broader here than just picking certain areas where we need to put in funding. I would love to hear the witnesses' views on that. There will be a general election coming up quite soon and I was just wondering if any engagement has been made with political parties in terms of their manifestos and what actions they will putting into them. I know this is a bit broader but it is no harm to be thinking about it anyway. That could be engaged with straightaway and would be important.

I agree with what has been said about affirmative action and mainstreaming, which would be crucial.

I also thought what was said about older people was interesting. I think about the skills of some older men and women. The Irish Men's Sheds Association is a great organisation with which I have had many dealings and I wonder has there been engagement with them at national level. It is a good organisation, which receives quite a lot of public funding. Some of the recently retired men I know in the settled community are finding them fantastic outlets and similar organisations would be good for the older community. I heard recently that women's sheds have also been established, which is interesting. Ms Quilligan's statement on the elders and their demands for action was moving. It is incumbent on all of us to ensure the change that has been demanded takes place and I would be interested in hearing the views of our guests.

The pilot scheme with the SEAI is a great idea but we need more than pilots; that must be mainstreamed.

This is the direction in which we need to be going and I would like to hear the views of our guests about the whole-of-society approach. If change is to happen, that is the only way it is going to work.

Chairman: There was a lot to consider in that contribution, touching on the whole-of-society, whole-of-Government approaches, the opportunities following a general election and men's sheds. I also like the idea of women's sheds as I might sometimes like to hide in one.

Ms Joanna Corcoran: The Deputy is correct in what she has said about the whole-of-Government and whole-of-society approaches. It needs to be a whole change, part of which will start with education that should never stop at any age. One of our recommendations is something that we always say: anti-racism, cultural awareness training and dignity should be embodied into everything. If dignity is embodied into all kinds of training, it will be brought out everywhere. It will not happen overnight but we are thinking about future generations

because the struggle we have faced has been going on for years. As Ms Quilligan said earlier, we are where we are because of the continued fight and challenging of attitudes. We must start that now in the development of the education curricula for nurseries and primary schools so that change happens. Cultural awareness training needs to be mandatory in all organisations, public and private, in all sectors. That is a recommendation that would have far-reaching consequences.

The pilot schemes with First Class Insulation, FCI, and Bounce Back Recycling are brilliant. We have done that on the back of the small amount of support that is there now. Imagine the success we could have if we had proper funding and support across Ireland for the Traveller economy. It would be brilliant.

Chairman: Something that is coming up over and over again is that initiatives are happening on a shoestring and in spite of the State as opposed to because of it. That is a strong recommendation.

I am conscious that we have not heard from two people on the panel. I will not put them on the spot, but I encourage them to come forward if they would like to make a comment on anything they have heard.

Mr. Kyle Quill: I thank the committee for welcoming me here. I heard mention of people over 50 years old, men's sheds and other things but nothing has been said about younger people, including those in their 20s. There is no dedicated target planned to support Travellers in training facilities and that needs to change. Those facilities are where one is supposed to go for employment and there is a long-term unemployment problem for Travellers, especially young Travellers. Young Travellers come to me all the time asking if I can get them a job, and I am stuck because I cannot. They are leaving school early because they face racism and discrimination. They themselves and their families have very low expectations of them going on to get a junior certificate, a leaving certificate and going to third-level education. There is no real support for them to go on and get employment either. There is no real support for them to push on to third-level education. Nowadays education is key. It needs to be implemented strongly, with agencies such as Intreo and SOLAS. There must be a dedicated plan for the young people to support them and get them employment. For me, it is like, "Kyle, can you get me a job?"

Chairman: That is the job of the State agencies.

Mr. Hugh Friel: Yes. It is not that simple.

Even from my own perspective, I liked what was said about a "safe space". A safe space whenever one is working is a major issue because there are many Travellers hiding their identity and they are trying to get work. Whenever they are hiding their identity, they are hearing discriminatory and racist comments about Travellers. I myself experienced it.

Chairman: Who would want to go into that kind of workplace every day?

Mr. Hugh Friel: It is why I wanted become a youth worker. When I was working for a different organisation, I was in a retail store and they would say that whenever the Travellers would come in one should press the button on the phone, make an announcement or something like that so that everybody in the store would know who was coming in. With me sitting there, that made me feel low. I had low self-esteem. It angered me. Channelling that anger, I wanted to do something. I wondered how other young people would challenge this. That is why I became a youth worker. I wanted to change it. The likes of these training centres should be

making a dedicated target plan for young people to proceed in long-term employment.

Chairman: Not just schemes or short term.

Mr. Hugh Friel: Yes. It is best that they do not have more time on their hands. Drug and alcohol addiction is picking up. More young people are vulnerable to it. They are going drinking all the time. They are getting into drugs. They are trying to make fast money. It should not happen. The education route is the way it should go and it should lead to employment. These services should pick up on it.

Chairman: If we had the whole-of-Government approach that Deputy Corcoran Kennedy referred to, every workplace, not only Traveller NGOs, would be safe places. Are there any other comments?

Mr. Michael McCarthy: We said nothing about the route for young Traveller women. We need a training support service to keep away from drugs and crime, and for mental health.

Chairman: Those would be important parts of any employment strategy. Does anybody else wish to speak or will we move on?

Mr. Bernard Joyce: When we talk about employment, we are also talking about the other issues that impact on Travellers today. People are at their peak and career driven between the ages of 35 and 40. Obviously, I am over 40.

Chairman: Diversity in the room.

Mr. Bernard Joyce: I was reminded that within the Traveller sector when we talk about community development, many Travellers do not take out pensions. They do not consider pensions because they do not live beyond-----

Chairman: Because they do not often live to the age of pension.

Mr. Bernard Joyce: Fifty per cent of Travellers do not live beyond the age of 38. It is sad that one has such a young population and yet when one looks at the employment opportunities, they will not live beyond that age.

The other side of that is one is also looking at people living in the housing crisis. Travellers are living in some of the worst conditions that any human being could live in. They are expected to go into mainstream employment without having adequate facilities. People are generally not living but surviving. We have to move beyond survival to people living, and thinking about opportunities that can prevail. Having to hide one's identity because of shame, stigma or ridicule is fundamentally wrong and flawed. The onus should not be on a young person to have to live with that but must be on the State to respond in such a way that it creates a very open, diverse, inclusive society that is fair and just and supports people regardless of their ethnicity. That is a shame for society and it is a shame that we do not have a national anti-racism strategy in place, that we do not have hate crime legislation *in situ* and that we do not have the political leadership to drive home the message that a person's participation in society is crucial and important, and what a person can bring with his or her skills and trades is part of what our society and economy needs. Travellers have played a fundamental part in the past.

I refer to matters such as the criminal trespass legislation for Travellers who are nomadic, which was introduced in 2000. By-laws have been introduced about horse ownership and the conditions that apply for horses. Ironically, the horses needed to have better living conditions

than the Travellers who were living in those conditions. That was quite flawed. Not many Travellers have got permits and licences from local authorities because the conditions have been indirectly discriminatory towards Travellers. The Casual Trading Act 1995 made it hard for Travellers to trade. That vibrant pattern of the Traveller economy and trade was certainly hindered overnight. There is a need to look at not only innovation and employment but also at legislation which has impacted Travellers. To have full employment in society and 80% of Travellers unemployed is flawed and needs political attention. I welcome the political representation in manifestos. We would welcome working with all political parties about how that can be progressed in the lead-in to the general election.

Senator Jennifer Murnane O'Connor: Recommendations are important but they only count when there is funding and enforcement. As previous speakers said, if one is sitting here again in 20 years and there is no change, that will not be good. We need to make sure that there is a plan of action, and enforcement and funding for recommendations. All of us, no matter what political party we are in, need to work together for that. There needs to be significant cultural awareness, as previous speakers said. That would open many doors. In my constituency, mental health is important, as are apprenticeships. It is worrying that young men want apprenticeships and cannot get them. That is not right. This is 2019 and men and women who want apprenticeships cannot get sponsors. That is worrying and needs to be examined. We discussed housing, which is a significant issue, and the supports available, whether one is looking for a bathroom adaptation grant, for work on windows or doors or a ramp that might be needed. There are some supports, which are welcome, but we need to work to have more supports. It is worrying that there is 80% unemployment. I support these recommendations and all of us working together can make that change. The witnesses have spoken well and everything that I was about to say has been said, so well done to them for coming to outline their recommendations.

Deputy Gino Kenny: I thank everybody for their insightful contributions, though they were also very depressing in some ways, in that 80% of Travellers are unemployed. There is obviously a reason for that. Systematic discrimination happens daily and that is extremely difficult for the Traveller community to take. As we have said each week, this has been internalised and can cause all sorts of difficulties socially and civically. I have a question for Ms Quilligan about affirmative action. I know there is a history of this in the United States. I think it was called positive discrimination. I presume that is not the terminology. I think affirmative action was relatively positive in the United States. Black people were discriminated against civically and this was a basis for them to access employment. Once they accessed employment, they then opened up other pathways. Is there a history of affirmative action in this country? I know there is for people with disabilities. Is there a history relating to the Traveller community? What would pathways look like, especially in the public sector? I think there are 300,000 people working in the public sector. That would be another pathway. What would it look like for the private sector, which I know is slightly more problematic? If 80% of the Traveller community are unemployed, an extraordinary statistic, what does the pathway look like and how long could it take to make an impact?

Chairman: I think that merits a response in itself and then we will go to Senator Warfield's questions. What does affirmative action look like and does it work?

Ms Brigid Quilligan: It does work. It has been proven to work globally in many different areas. There is a history of affirmative action in the State relevant to Travellers. I call it affirmative action. It is the primary healthcare programme. That budget is ring-fenced specifically

for Travellers, arising out of the findings of the all-Ireland Traveller health study about the poor statistics relating to Traveller health and the social determinants of health. We have a group across the country of more than 400 primary healthcare workers who go out to deliver healthcare in a peer-to-peer way every day. They do magnificent work. They have all benefited from a national training programme which was rolled out before people around the country, including myself, were taken on. That is one model of affirmative action.

Another is smaller but as effective if one is looking at the small numbers of Travellers in employment in the State in the public sector. Lord have mercy on Joe Horan's soul since he was a great man. When he was in South Dublin County Council, he introduced a programme of affirmative action where he took on people under the special initiative. Some of those people are employed today across local authorities around the country. That was a small sample of how that could work. They were brought in at a very low level and supported to work their way up the ranks like anybody else. In doing that, one has to look at all the barriers that exist for Travellers such as the leaving certificate. One has to look at par learning, skills and experience and at people's aptitude. We have to change the way we look at things. I know I am deviating a little but the apprenticeship model is perfect. There are 12 and 13 year olds in Kerry who want to do apprenticeships. A normal person working in the education sector will laugh at them and say they are 12 or 13. We have 12 year olds who know what they want to do. There are possibilities of affirmative action but we have to change our way of thinking and listen to the needs of the community. In my own town, among nomadic people, I could ask ten young fellows if they will stay in school if I can have them trained by the age of 17. We could negotiate a partnership with their families to keep those young people in the system and ensure they graduate from an apprenticeship scheme but that requires a shift in thinking. All of these affirmative actions are very easy to do if one is willing to change one's thinking. There are models in the United States and Australia. Anywhere one has had an ethnic minority who have been oppressed and marginalised the powers that be had to bring in affirmative actions because there is no other way to leverage things. A whole community here, and I mean people my age, were segregated. Now, children of six and seven years have been put on reduced timetables and attend schools for one hour a week or one hour a day. What are their chances of success when they have less of an education than their parents and grandparents enjoyed? I am passionate about this matter because we are dealing with children who are experiencing this.

Deputy Gino Kenny: How can such children avail of apprenticeships?

Ms Brigid Quilligan: By people like the Deputy and ourselves asking for that but also the education agencies such as the ETBs. In Kerry, we can have all of these people on board but the problem is they are coming up the line nationally at NTRIS or whatever the powers that be. That is why we recommended a dedicated Traveller Department to specifically consider Traveller issues and our history. We cannot be treated in isolation like we arrived in this country in 2019. We must consider our history, how we got here and try to unpack that.

Chairman: I thank the delegation for giving us plenty of questions. Mr. Friel wishes to comment and Senator Warfield has a question. I remind everyone that our next session is with Solas, and we will have IBEC, ICTU, Enterprise Ireland and Mr. Gavin Hennessy from Irish Life. We are also trying to persuade the ESRI to come here.

Mr. Hugh Friel: I thank every last one of the Members for listening to our submissions and research on our community and the issues faced by our community. In my opinion, the all-Ireland health study is out of date. There is an epidemic within our community - certainly in Donegal and it is transparent throughout the country - that mental health is at a crucial stage. As

a men's health and developer worker, I had this discussion one day that I could name five or six people eight or nine years ago who had alcohol addictions but now I can name 50 people who are on drugs. That transition happened within the community because drug addiction was hidden. If people were addicted to prescription medication or other illicit drugs their addiction was hidden within the community. Now the issue is exposed everyday when one talks to individuals and young people. The issue is transparent in all of the Traveller organisations in terms of the younger generation. I never knew my grandfather and granny, which is the experience of many Travellers because their grandparents died at a young age. As a Traveller man I am expected to live until 65 years. It is deplorable to think about early mortality in terms of the younger generation of Travellers between the ages of 16 and 30 years. As alluded to by Ms Quilligan, people have expectations at 13 years. That is not unrealistic for Travellers because we are job smart, education smart and street smart at the age of ten or 12 years. Our life is compacted into us having a lot more pressures as young people. We have all of these things stacked on top of us from the ages of ten to 14 years and are expected to have the brain of a 30-year old. As Ms Quilligan alluded to, that is why young Traveller men and women talk about apprenticeships.

I sit on NTRIS and, as I have said, everyone's language must change around the expectations of Travellers because people think that Travellers are inferior when it comes to employment, education and health. The settled community get bursaries from the State to handhold Travellers but we do not need such assistance anymore. There is a bit of that but certainly we are a people who are well educated in terms of advocating for our rights and have the ability to go forward, which is why we are here today. A cohort of people in university in Dublin and in colleges in Donegal need that apprenticeship model going out of colleges and need a helping hand or stepping stone from the State to make them job ready because they wonder after they have done the junior and leaving certificates and spent five years in college doing social and health care what the State will provide for them. Apprenticeship is what the State can do. There are Travellers who are well educated and job ready. Any Traveller I engage with and other Traveller organisations all say the Traveller comes to Traveller organisations that run men's and women's development programmes to socialise because they are not allowed to socialise anywhere in society due to the discrimination and racial profiling they face. We are not allowed to go into cafes if there are three or four of us together. We sit there wondering if we are going to be put out. We cannot go to a pub or a venue to socialise. That is why I say we need role models in every sector of the State that Travellers can look to and say there is one of us in there to make a safe space.

Chairman: I hate to cut anyone short because everything is important and more but it is important also that Senator Warfield gets to ask his questions now.

Senator Fintan Warfield: I thank everyone for giving their time to come here today. I agree with everything Mr. Friel said. We hear so much about diversity in the workplace, particularly in the corporate sector, we could use up forests full of paper on it but, as Senator Ruane said, the workplace is not so diverse even if it has a wide range of genders, races and sexual orientation but everyone is middle class. There are companies that pour thousands of euro into the Dublin LGBT Pride march. In addition to the *quid pro quo* for companies in receipt of State funding there should be a *quid pro quo* attached to the low corporation tax rate because the result of it is no money for mental health services, housing or social protection. We are talking about companies that channel profits worth €18 billion through this city and State at the expense of the services we need. I am glad that the Irish Business Employers Confederation, IBEC, will be here next week because I will raise this with its representatives.

Chairman: Is the Senator coming to his questions?

Senator Fintan Warfield: I thank everyone for their contributions, which were very powerful as always.

Ms Brigid Quilligan: All we are asking for is all we deserve. A people cannot be criticised for not working if the opportunities and supports are not put in place and if those opportunities that are put in place are not provided in consultation with the community. We often hear people say Travellers are not taking up the service and they are not participating. We would participate if the service suited us and was designed in consultation with us. The next time anybody present hears the line that Travellers are not engaging they should challenge it and ask why they are not engaging. I like the idea of anybody profiting from State funds having to answer that question.

Chairman: It is impossible to sum up. Mr. Joyce gave us the idea of Travellers as the social entrepreneurs of Ireland. That is the history and tradition. He also spoke about Travellers removing themselves from the chains of poverty. Why would any community or group of people not want to do that? The 80% unemployment rate is a national disgrace. Mr. Friel echoed that comment. Despite that statistic, however, there is no official mention of Travellers in Pathways to Work, so they have no monitoring or data. They do not know. Then it is said people are not engaging. How do we know? Perhaps the offer is not the right one. Perhaps all these offers must be flexible and consequent on what Travellers themselves say.

There is a very strong rural perspective, from both Kerry and Donegal. The fact that there is a preponderance of Travellers employed in Traveller NGOs is great, of course. Who else should be? At the same time, however, there are plenty of organisations in the public, private and voluntary sectors that would benefit from Travellers being a part of them. There are useful examples of what can be done, such as South Dublin County Council, if there is a will. Why not replicate that? There are some fantastic ideas and innovations - First Class Insulation, Bounce Back Recycling, Springback Upcycling, Crossbar Bikes - but they are run on a piecemeal basis and on a shoestring. They need to be put on a more solid footing.

We have good models of affirmative action from the primary health initiatives that were taken. If private enterprises are getting money, they should give something back in terms of diversity. Every workplace in the country should be a welcoming one, where nobody has to hide his or her identity but can be out and proud, as we said of a different community, such that people can come to work and be themselves. It is not a matter of asking or seeking, as Ms Quilligan said, but demanding. As Deputy Corcoran Kennedy said, we need a whole-of-Government, whole-of-society approach and need to go up a level. The NITRIS is great but needs to be given an absolute shot in the arm. Deputy Stanton is a very serious and dedicated Minister of State but he needs more powers at his disposal to shift the mental health, unemployment, education, accommodation and health crises. We need serious actions if we are to do that, and our committee is determined to make strong recommendations.

It is hard for the witnesses to have to come here to tell their stories. They have done it well again. We learn from them every week we are here and read their submissions. We will honour the effort they have put in. I thank them so much.

The meeting is now adjourned until 1.30 p.m. on Wednesday, 15 January, when we will continue our deliberations with IBEC; the Irish Congress of Trade Unions, ICTU; SOLAS; Enterprise Ireland; Irish Life; and, I hope, the ESRI. The work goes on.

The joint committee adjourned at 12.57 p.m. until 1.30 p.m. on Wednesday, 15 January 2020.