

MTCMI 2014 Annual Report

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1. Summary Description of MTCMI activities in 2014

Following MTCMI recruitment in December 2013 for the MTCMI Coordinator and Mediator positions, Joe McGrath was re-recruited for the Mediator position (in the position previously). Aileen O'Brien was recruited for the Coordinator position, and commenced employment in January 2014.

The main focus of the first two months for the Coordinator was centred on familiarisation with MTCMI, setting up administrative procedures, developing a strategic framework, and carrying out introductory visits and meetings.

Introductory visits were carried out with the MTCMI Mediator to many of the stakeholders, in order to build relationships, share information and gain an understanding of the MTCMI work to date.

Once these were carried out, the main focus of the work became centred on processing new mediation referrals, dealing with current referrals; following up with stakeholders about proposed training; writing up case referrals, and regularly updating the recording and collating all the cases.

In May the work included running a two day Training Workshop for Travellers. In June we ran a 2 day inter-agency workshop and, in July, a second two day Training Workshop for Travellers. The training work also included writing up and reviewing the training, and planning next steps.

Much time was spent over the summer months dealing with a number of quite complex, time intensive referrals. Quite a number of new referrals also came in during this period, and we continued to record the process and outcomes of all cases.

In June, we received good news on the funding front, with confirmation of funding for MTCMI for 2014 from the Equality Division of the Department of Justice & Equality, and an understanding that the funding would be continued at the same level for 2015 and 2016.

We had an initial meeting with the Edward Kennedy Institute (NUI Maynooth) CEO and Programme Director in July, to discuss collaborating with them on an accredited Conflict Intervention/Mediation training programme for Travellers.

On Schools work: I met with the Athlone Education Centre Director re. training possibilities for teachers, made presentations to Home School Community Liaison Midlands Regional Cluster group; and to the Midlands Educational Welfare Officers meeting. In September we met with an Athlone National School principal (where there are 40 + Traveller children enrolled currently) to look at running a number of sessions for 6th class students over the autumn term (as part of a response to a bullying case).

On the issue of the escalation of Traveller conflicts through the use of Social Media, we met with the Directors of national Traveller organisations Exchange House, Pavee Point, the Irish Traveller Movement, and the Traveller Counselling Service. They have agreed in principle for MTCMI to convene a meeting in the autumn to consider a collective response to this issue. Due to a number of factors, this action has not yet been progressed.

During August we visited Cloverhill prison, and spoke with the Assistant Governor about the possibility of MTCMI running a number of sessions with Traveller prisoners there, as well as taking referrals from Travellers on remand who are having difficulties with other prisoners/staff.

We also met with the Director of the Irish Penal Reform Trust to inform her of our work and to discuss the situation regarding Traveller prisoners as reported in their recently commissioned '*Travellers in the Irish Prison System: A qualitative study*'. Following on from this, we participated in a Working Group set up by the St. Stephens Green Trust (SSGT) to put together a plan for a 'Travellers in Prison' Initiative, to be funded by the SSGT over the next three years.

In October we ran a Garda/Traveller morning workshop attended by 12 participants. The group felt that the morning had helped to build trust, and that they would be more likely to contact each other (Traveller/gardai) locally after this session. We held a Garda/Traveller morning follow up session in December. The main agreed action from the meeting was to set up local networks in each county from January, and to come together again at the end of February to review progress.

October and November proved to be busy months for MTCMI, with case referrals from Gardai and families in Westmeath, Longford, and Dublin involving a number of different families, and with complex issues. There are some very serious cases presenting now, in terms of the levels of violence and the types of weapons being used.

On MTCMI recruitment: we advertised for a third staff member in August but did not recruit from this process, and advertised again in October. The recruitment process was completed in December, and the new staff member is commencing employment with us work on January 5th 2015.

We convened a consultation meeting in Maynooth on December 17th with the Programme Director with the Edward Kennedy Institute, to discuss the design and development of an accredited Traveller training programme. Five Traveller representatives participated in the session.

2. MTCMI 2014 Annual Report

Report format: The report will cross reference the 2014 MTCMI actions with the MTCMI 2014 Strategic Plan objectives (developed and agreed in March 2014), as below.

MTCMI Strategic Plan 2014: Overall Objective

To work in partnership with Travellers and other relevant stakeholders towards the development of effective conflict prevention and intervention strategies

M.T.C.M.I will work to mediate conflicts between Travellers and between Travellers/Agencies /the Settled Community to address problems before they come to the attention of the Gardai or the Courts or result in sanctions. The service will seek to build ADR skills in the Traveller Community and amongst those working with them.

To achieve this objective, MTCMI will work in the following ways:

- Proactively work to respond to and resolve conflicts using Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR), including delivery of mediation and Alternative Dispute Resolution where appropriate
- Implement alternative dispute resolution through capacity building and training of Travellers and those working with them.
- Interact and engage with all the relevant statutory agencies
- Continue to engage with, build and strengthen relationships with Traveller families, Traveller organisations, and Community/Education Centres where Traveller are participating.
- Raise awareness, promote and implement mediation training, and capacity building on prevention and management of conflict.
- Disseminate MTCMI information to the wider community.

MTCMI Strategic Plan 2014: Specific Objectives

1. Administration/Systems Development Objectives

- Develop a referral and case management system, including a process for onward referrals
- Explore and source a sustainable channel of funding for MTCMI
- Review and bring to Steering Committee for approval MTCMI Vision, Mission, and Values Statements.

Systems Development Actions in 2014:

- Developed a draft MTCMI six month Work Plan (February to July 2014), which was presented to the MTCMI Steering Committee meeting on 12th February
- Referral caseload from 2013 recorded and logged

- Developed template for recording of all new cases, from January 2014.
- Development of MTCMI Strategic Plan for 2014.
- Developed MTCMI Vision, Mission, and Values Statements, and approved by Steering Committee.
- Each case written up on a monthly basis to record process, progress, and outcome.
- System for compiling data of number/type of cases initiated, and implemented.
- Job description for a 3rd MTCMI staff member (Training Facilitator/Mediator) developed and agreed.
- Volunteer Policies & Procedures for Traveller Advisory role developed.

Administrative Actions in 2014:

- Organised purchase of a laptop and printer; set up mobile phones contracts; sourced, and set up modem in order to access the internet/email in the Tullamore office.
- Read through and filed all relevant reports to date; accessed, sorted, and organised all online files, including budget for 2014.
- Templates for Annual Leave, TOIL, and Travel/Subsistence introduced and kept up to date.
- MTCMI Logo designed and agreed, and Business Cards, and stationery printed.
- New staff member recruited. Position advertised in August, with interviews held on 22nd September. Recruitment not successful. The re-advertisement for a 3rd MTCMI staff member (Conflict Mediator/Trainer) was posted on Activelink in October, and interviews were held on 20th November. The recruitment process completed in December, and the new staff member to start on January 5th 2015.

MTCMI Funding

A number of funding avenues were explored in the first half of 2014, including European grants, the International Fund for Ireland, St. Stephens Green Trust, and others. Our 2014 funding from the Rountree Trust granted for the specific purpose ...*'to seek further resources to put the MTCMI on a sustainable footing by delivering management capacity to the initiative'* came to an end in December 2014.

In June 2014 we received a letter from Assistant Secretary in the Equality Division of the Department of Justice & Equality to advise that they had committed to funding MTCMI to the extent of €100,000 in 2014, and that they 'envisage support continuing going forward in 2015 and 2016 on a similar basis subject to the normal budgetary requirements and continuous progress in relation to this Traveller mediation initiative'. We met with the Principal Officer in DJELR's Diversity & Equality Law Division in September and informed him of the work to date. He gave an indication of an understanding that, due to the complexity of the work, a 10 year timeframe could be considered if progress was being demonstrated and a strategic framework with comprehensive systems for measuring outcomes was in place.

Please see Appendix 1 for 2014 MTCMI Income and expenditure Statement.

Mediation Objectives

- Maintain and promote mediation between Travellers, and record process and outcomes for each referral.
- Maintain and promote mediation between Travellers and Agencies, and record process and outcomes for each referral.
- Maintain and promote mediation between Travellers and the Settled Community, and record process and outcomes for each referral

Mediation Actions in 2014:

- Developed new referral form and disseminated to relevant referral sources
- A formalised referral procedure implemented
- Team meetings held on a weekly basis to review current cases and discuss new referrals
- System for onward referrals introduced.

Mediation Caseload in 2014

63 referrals were received from January 20th until December 22nd 2014

No. of cases completed = 45

Breakdown of completed cases:

- Westmeath 14 cases
- Offaly 15 cases
- Longford 3 cases
- Inter-county 4 cases
- Mayo 1 case
- Dublin 1 case
- Laois 4 cases
- Sligo 1 case
- Galway 2 cases

Presenting as:

- Traveller/Traveller - 22 cases
- Traveller/Agency - 20 cases
- Traveller/Settled - 2 cases
- Settled/Agency - 1 case

No. of Current and new cases as of 22nd December = 18

Breakdown of current cases:

- Westmeath 4 cases
- Offaly 3 cases
- Laois 0 cases
- Longford 3 cases

- Inter-County 4 cases
- Dublin 2 cases
- Meath 1 case
- Kildare 1 case

Presenting as:

- Traveller/Traveller - 12 cases
- Traveller/Agency - 5 cases
- Traveller/Settled - 1 case

Examples of mediation cases in 2014, and feedback from stakeholders

The case recorded below is of a referral from a Local Authority regarding the re-location and accommodation of 15 families to a permanent site.

Throughout the months January to May 2014 MTCMI worked with families to achieve a re-location from an unofficial site to accommodation in permanent bays provided by the Local Authority in Offaly. During this time there were a number of outbreaks of violence amongst some members resulting in physical injuries, property damage and some families being moved out of Offaly. The main focus for the MTCMI continued to centre on finding a satisfactory solution for all of the families seeking suitable accommodation either in the permanent bay site or elsewhere. This was a very slow and painstaking piece of work that required some MTCMI input almost every day. There were many meetings with officials of the Town Council, County Council, Social Workers and families. Eventually the obstacles were overcome and a satisfactory outcome was arrived at where the families are now accommodated to an agreed standard, and the unofficial Halting Site has been closed completely.

There have also been a number of protracted and complex Traveller/Traveller mediation cases that have taken up a considerable amount of MTCMI time. The excerpts from the following reports, received by MTCMI, reflect the range of Traveller/Traveller cases that have been completed recently:

Home School Community Liaison Coordinator report re. a school referral concerning a dispute between Traveller students:

The effect of the MTCMI work impacted on the Traveller students, their families and our school in a significant way. The students were able to resume working effectively together in their classes and all those involved in the dispute completed their Junior Certificate examination in June 2014. The inter-family threats and violence also ceased and communications between families and the school improved. Without mediation the situation would have escalated and culminated in serious breaches of the peace and personal injury. With mediation the school was also able to retain the girls in education but only because mediation was in place and ongoing.

Supt. Joe Doherty, Mayo re. MTCMI referral concerning a feud between local Traveller families:

In the Circuit Court where 14 defendants appeared, Circuit Court Judge Johnson praised the efforts of local Gardai and Mr. McGrath's efforts to bring peace through mediation. In fact

he urged both sides to continue the mediation process. The comments of the Judge were highlighted in the local press and radio.

...I believe that mediation is the way forward in dealing with feuds of this nature. To date it has proved very successful in the Mayo division. Due to its success it has led to huge savings in overtime bills, free legal aid and enhanced the image of towns like Ballinrobe portraying it as a safe place to visit/live.

Supt John Moloney, Offaly Division concerning a potentially explosive situation between Traveller families:

Just a word of thanks and appreciation to you, Joe McGrath and MTCMI for your assistance in defusing a potentially dangerous feud in the lead up to the Annual Cemetery Sunday Mass in Clonminch Cemetery, Tullamore (in August 2014)... This is an excellent example of mediation at work and demonstrates the value of MTCMI. It also resulted in a substantial cost-saving in the policing of the event.

Development Work Objectives

- **Develop and run tailored workshops and training programmes for Traveller men, women, and youth groups.**
- **Develop and run Agency specific workshops,**
- **Develop and run inter-agency/agency/community/Traveller Workshops which lead to improved understanding of and communication between all the stakeholders.**
- **Build sustainability by developing the capacity of key Travellers, and those who work with them, through the delivery of a pre-Mediation Skills Programme. This will be reviewed and will be followed by the delivery of an accredited Mediation training programme if this is appropriate. This will facilitate the establishment of a panel of Mediators who can be called upon to support the efforts of the MTCMI.**
- **Engage in a range of capacity building/training activities including offering training sessions in schools, Youthreach Centres, HSE funded groups, etc, in response to needs/requests.**
- **Organise Seminars and Peer Learning events as required with the aim of promoting best practice and disseminating learning.**

Training/Development Actions in 2014:

A series of consultation visits were carried out in February and March, and, from the feedback received, we decided to run two training workshops and then review to gather the learning and develop a training programme for the year ahead.

We met with and organised for an external trainer to work with us on two sets of trainings: 12th and 13th May: Traveller focus; 16th & 17th June: Inter-agency focus, With a possible 3rd training day consisting of both groups together.

We listed the range of training ideas that have come from the consultations and our future training/development programme will be based on these suggestions.

The trainer became unavailable to attend for the training dates, so we facilitated the training ourselves.

An evaluation from each workshop was completed at the end of the second day, and the findings collated. The feedback was positive and useful, and included a number of recommendations. One of the main recommendations from the Traveller workshops included the idea of training a group of Traveller men as mediators to help to prevent and resolve Traveller conflicts. The recommendation from the group was that the men be recruited from different areas and families, so that all the main extended Traveller families would be seen to be represented/included at some level in the initiative, and could work together towards resolving Traveller/Traveller conflicts. There was also an expressed request for further training for young adult Travellers.

- We ran 2 two day training workshops between May and July 2014 on 'Dealing with Conflict: An Alternative Approach'. The workshops were attended by a total of 46 Travellers (25 men and 21 women) from the 4 midland counties.
- A 2 day Inter-Agency workshop took place in June, with 21 people participating from a range of agencies/community groups (Gardai, schools, Local Development Companies, Local Authority, TUSLA, Community Development workers working with Travellers/Voice of Traveller staff).
- The idea of a Garda/Traveller one day seminar was suggested at the Inter-Agency workshop, and this took place on Thursday 2nd October in Clonminch. A second half-day was held on 4th December.
- Two Restorative Practice Circle Time sessions for sixth class students in the Athlone National School took place between in October and November.

Traveller Advisory role

Also, in terms of development and capacity-building, we discussed and developed a formalised, voluntary 'Traveller Advisory' role with the following rationale:

There is an acknowledged, evidenced benefit for the MTCMI to engage the expertise and the knowledge of Travellers, who have a track record in peace-making and a proven understanding and belief in the mediation process, to assist in a voluntary capacity in certain specific mediation cases. Past experience has indicated that this involvement can significantly increase the likelihood of achieving a positive outcome in specific cases where a number of families are involved.

The role of the Traveller Advisor volunteer is to support the work of the MTCMI through assisting in an advisory capacity in certain specific case referrals under the supervision of a qualified Mediator.

Edward Kennedy Institute for Conflict Intervention, NUI Maynooth

During 2014 we worked at developing a professional relationship with Edward Kennedy Institute, and have been engaged in discussions with the Institute about the possibility of collaborating on piloting an accredited Mediation training programme for Travellers. We developed a draft Project Proposal to form as a discussion document, and met with the Edward Kennedy Director and Programme Director in July.

A follow up meeting took place in November, and the Programme Director has asked that we facilitate meetings and visits with Traveller agencies and groups/individuals over the coming weeks to help her to work with us in tailoring a culturally appropriate training programme.

A consultation meeting to discuss the design and development of an accredited Traveller training programme took place in Maynooth on December 17th with the Edward Kennedy Institute, MTCMI, and 5 Traveller representatives.

Communications/Stakeholder Engagement/Advocacy Objectives

- **Raise public awareness of the MTCMI and promote as a model of best practice.**
- **Build and maintain professional relationships with other agencies and develop a media policy**
- **Align the MTCMI with relevant academic and professional groups**
- **Develop organisational and policy commitment of agencies to MTCMI**

Communications/Stakeholder Engagement/Advocacy Actions in 2014:

Consultations were carried out with a range of stakeholders in the early months of 2014 to assess training requirements and needs, and information sharing/networking visits and meetings were also conducted. We also engaged with a substantial number of stakeholders through the case referrals. (See Appendix 1 for details).

MTCMI has worked at raising public awareness and building professional relationships with agencies, Travellers, and other stakeholders through the visits, workshops, and meetings with a broad spectrum of professional and community groups and individuals over the last year. (Please see Appendix 2 for detailed list of visits & meetings included in 2014).

A media policy has not yet been developed, and will be carried over into the 2015 workplan.

We participated in Traveller Inter-Agency meetings in Westmeath, Longford, and Laois, and in a range of other relevant meetings/groups during 2014, and make contact with other relevant agencies, groups, and individuals on an ongoing basis.

We have been working at developing organisational and policy commitment, and have been greatly helped in this regard by the commitment and ongoing support of our Steering Committee. Fergal Fox, our Committee Chair, met with the new Offaly County Manager on behalf of MTCMI in November to establish formal links, and also gave a presentation of the work of MTCMI to the International Mediation Conference in Maynooth in September.

In terms of aligning MTCMI with academic groups, we are pleased to report that we have been able to build a close collaborative relationship with the Edward Kennedy Institute, NUIM during 2014.

Aileen O'Brien
MTCMI Coordinator
January 2015

3. Appendix 1

MTCMI Income and Expenditure Statement 2014

Income	
Grant Payment Dept Of Justice and Equality 2013 unspent and carried over to 2014	32,725
Grant Payment Dept Of Justice and Equality 2014	100,000
Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust	50,000
HSE Traveller Health Unit	6,000
Total Income 2014	€188,725

Expenditure	
Salaries and PRSI	74,295.00
Bank Fees	53.34
Management Fee to Restorative Justice in the Community	10,140.00
Phone	725.67
Employee Equipment Set Up	1,190.64
Insurance	732.50
Printing / Stationery	172.20
Travel	11,574.66
Training	1,272.80
Recruitment	180.00
Total Expenditure 2014	€100,336.81

Income [€188,725] minus expenditure [€100,336.81] = **€88,388.19**

Balance in MTCMI Account as of 31st Dec 2014: €106,246.90

Payments due but not yet cashed as of 31st Dec 2014: €17,858.71 as follows:

€10,140 RJC Management Fee paid by Electronic Fund transfer 6th Jan 2015 for
Jan to Dec 2014

€7718.71 Payment to Revenue Commissioners for Quarter Four 2014.

Closing Balance 31st Dec 2014: [€106,246.90 minus €17,858.71] **€88,388.19** balance of funds carried to January 2015

4. Appendix 2

Visits and meetings in 2014 included

- Visits to Tullamore halting site (Kilcruttin)
- Visits to Blackberry Lane site, including visit to Community Centre, and meeting the families
- Visits to Traveller families in Mullingar
- Visits/meetings with Exchange House and the Irish Traveller Movement management & staff
- Visit to Clara Youthreach Centre
- Visit to Tullamore Community Training Centre
- Visit and meeting with Longford PHC Coordinator and team
- Visit to Mountmellick Youthreach Centre
- Visit to 'Involve' and meeting with 'Voice of the Traveller' reporters
- Introductory visits to Traveller families in Longford town
- Visit to Southside Travellers/meeting with Director & Chair
- Visit to Pavee Point and meeting with Director
- Visit to Cloverhill prisoners and meeting with Assistant Governor
- Visit to Wheatfield Prison
- Visit to Shelton Abbey open prison
- Meetings with Offaly Town Clerk and staff
- Met with OTM Project Coordinator, and visit to OTM offices
- Meetings with Westmeath Co. Co. Senior Housing Officer
- Meetings with Westmeath Community Development
- Meeting with Programme Manager, Laois Partnership Company, in Portlaoise
- Visit to LTAG and meeting with staff and PHC team
- Meeting with Traveller representatives in Navan
- Meeting with local District Court Judge in Tullamore
- Meeting with Supt. Portlaoise Garda station, and follow up meeting with Portlaoise Garda management team. September: Meeting with the new Garda Superintendent in Portlaoise
- Meeting with Programme Manager, Offaly Development Company
- Longford: meeting with Inspector and Community Sergeant
- Meeting with Irish Prison Service Director, Education Coordinator, and Victim Liaison Officer
- Meeting with Westmeath PHC team in Mullingar
- Meeting with Laois Co. Co. Representatives
- Meeting with Longford Community Resources Programme Coordinator and other staff members
- Meeting with Supt. Mullingar Garda Station
- Meeting with Northside Mediation Manager (Valerie Gaughran) to discuss linking on provision of Mediation training
- Meeting with Longford County Council, Housing Dept. team
- Meeting with Families in Willow Park site, Longford
- Meeting with Home School Community Liaison Coordinator in Tullamore
- Meeting with Tipperary Chief Supt.
- Meeting with Education Welfare Officers team (Offaly, Laois, Westmeath)

- Meeting with HSE Mental Health Coordinator to exchange information/discuss training links.
- Attended a seminar in NUI Maynooth on promoting Restorative Practices in schools.
- Presentation on the MTCMI service given to the Home School Community Liaison Midlands Regional Cluster group (in St. Josephs N.S., Tullamore).
- Attended HSE Case conference on behalf of a client.
- Participated in International Conference on Mediation & Restorative Practices in Maynooth
- Joined Westmeath Traveller Project Advisory Committee
- Connection with/participation in Community Mediation Peer Learning Group
- Meeting with MRYS Director
- Meeting with Director of Athlone Education Centre re. collaborating on RP/Peer mediation training for teachers
- Met with N. Tipperary Garda Liaison officer in Roscrea to discuss possible referrals and links.
- Attended Traveller Women's Network meeting
- Attended ITM Conference
- Meetings in Edward Kennedy Institute (NUI Maynooth) re. training proposal
- Meeting with ITM Director
- Meeting with Traveller Counselling Service Director
- Participated in NUIM International Conference on Mediation and Restorative Practices
- TIG sub group meeting re. Blackberry Lane
- Meeting with Director of Irish Penal Reform Trust
- Visit to Longford Garda station and meeting with new acting Superintendent
- Meetings with Principal of Athlone National School and Education Welfare Officer to discuss running training sessions in the school over the coming term
- Participated in 3 meetings of the SSGT working group re. Travellers in Prison Initiative
- Visit to Southside Travellers Action Group (STA) in Dublin to a meeting with the STA Chair, manager, local Gardai and a local Council Housing rep. to inform them of MTCMI service and discuss a case referral.
- Attended Mens' Network meeting
- Attended RP Conference in Dublin Castle