



Evaluation of Traveller Mediation and Conflict Training Programme

by Brian Harvey

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FOREWORD

In 2014 MTCMI ran a two day workshop for Travellers in Westmeath/Offaly on the theme of managing and resolving conflicts. A key conclusion from the workshop was that the best people to resolve conflicts within the Traveller community are Travellers themselves, and that an accredited Traveller mediation training programme needed to be developed.

Following this workshop, MTCMI met with the representatives from the Edward Kennedy Institute (Maynooth University) to discuss the possibility of working together to pilot an accredited mediation and conflict training programme. MTCMI progressed the development of the initiative with the Kennedy Institute. Subsequently, Kildare/Wicklow ETB and Laois/Offaly ETB were contacted, and, following discussions, they agreed to also become stakeholders of the pilot programme. An Inter-Agency Steering Group with representatives from a number of regional and national Traveller organisations was then formed to guide the process and delivery of the programme. The following overall programme objective was agreed by the Steering Group: *'to deliver a culturally inclusive training programme on mediation and conflict'*.

The course began in March 2016, and ran for twelve months. It consisted of a Part 1 (an accredited QQI Level 5 course in Conflict resolution & Intercultural Studies) and a Part 2 (Mediators Institute of Ireland accredited Mediation Training Programme).

All of the students who participated made a valuable contribution. Primarily, I wish to congratulate and honour the seven students who completed the 2 modules of the Part 1 course successfully, and the six who completed both Part 1 and part 2 course. They significantly influenced the shape of the pilot programme through their wholehearted engagement in the process.

This has been a truly collaborative and innovative journey. My colleague Chris McDonagh and I would like to acknowledge and appreciate the central roles played by Delma Sweeney and Thomas McCann in the design and delivery of the programme; the valuable contribution made by Catherine O'Connell and the associate tutors, guest speakers, and Glenree Centre for hosting two workshops; the key roles of the Kennedy Institute and the Education & Training Boards; the valuable guidance and support of the members of the Steering Group; the financial support of the Department of Justice & Equality (through Restorative Justice in the Community), the HSE Midlands Traveller Health Unit, and St. Stephens Green Trust.

We wish to thank Brian Harvey for his thorough work in clearly conveying the process and outlining the key components in this very comprehensive report. As highlighted in the report recommendations, resources now need to be made available to fund a panel of Traveller mediators to use their skills and expertise for the benefit of the Traveller community and the wider society into the future.

Above all, we would like to congratulate the students for their very high level of commitment and hard work throughout the programme.

Aileen O'Brien
MTCMI Coordinator

Executive summary and key judgements

This is an evaluation of the Traveller Mediation and Conflict Training Pilot Programme led by the Midland Traveller and Conflict Mediation Initiative (MTCMI) at the Edward Kennedy Institute of the National University of Ireland Maynooth (NUIM) and Kildare and Wicklow Education and Training Board over 2016-7. This evaluation was carried out by means of two focus group interviews with participants and tutors; examination of documentation; and one-to-one interviews with tutors, organizers, participants and committee members. The course comprised a QQI 5 course of two modules, conflict resolution and intercultural studies (2016); and certified mediation training (2017), leading to the professional qualification of mediator. Sixteen students started, seven completed the QQI course and six completed both courses. The course was overseen by a steering committee representative of stakeholders which met seven times. The course was delivered weekly in Maynooth and used multiple instruction methods, generally informal, with additional help for those with literacy issues. The formal cost of the course was over €13,500, but this does not include the significant contribution of two MTCMI staff and tutoring time given *pro bono*.

The course collected real-time feedback from forms filled in daily. From them and from the focus groups, it is clear that participants rated the course highly, scoring it at 9.4 out of ten (2016 course) and 9.7 (2017 course). They valued the knowledge given and skills developed, the working methods (group discussions, role plays), the support of tutors, its cultural appropriateness and external engagements (e.g. gardai). They found both the course and the time commitment challenging. There was a good atmosphere in the group, students helped each other and the confidence of participants grew as they approached assessment. Problems with language and unsuitable rooms were resolved. Participants expected that afterwards they would work as mediators between Traveller families, in Traveller-agency issues or in the wider community. There were few organizational issues, attributed to its careful and thorough design.

The steering committee discharged its oversight tasks. The principal issue arising was the 37.5% completion rate: interviews indicated that drop-out was due to family or work circumstances, rather than the course itself and that these participants would like to return. Issues arose over the duration, seasonality, sequencing and location of the course. Recommendations were made:

- The steering committee to publish formal terms of reference, widen its membership and prepare a true-value formal budget;
- NUIM to issue participants with student cards;
- A small longitudinal study of the subsequent professional mediation experience of the participants, suggested for 2020; and
- Start a textbook on Traveller mediation based on this experience.
- Establishment and promotion of a panel of available mediators;
- Encourage organizational support of future individual participants.

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Terms of reference

The Midlands Traveller and Conflict Mediation Initiative (MTCMI) asked for a process and outcomes evaluation of its pilot programme with the Kennedy Institute of the National University of Ireland Maynooth (NUIM) and the Kildare and Wicklow Education and Training Board (KWETB) which began in March 2016. The aim of the evaluation was to assess the development, process and implementation of the pilot; its value to recipients and to the wider community; and to make recommendations for the roll-out of programmes or initiatives required to build on the work and to ensure sustainability into the future. Specifically, the evaluation design sought to combine a process study (an evaluation of programme implementation) and an outcomes study (an evaluation of programme impacts) and:

- Describe and locate the training from its theoretical, policy and service elements;
- Assess the setting up, recruitment and implementation of the training programme;
- Identify the self-reported effects of training on participants' quality of life;
- Reflect the views of stakeholders involved;
- Assess the wider impacts of the programme in areas such as community building and collaboration;
- Identify factors contributing to or detracting from the use of mediation or conflict intervention;
- Make recommendations for the future roll-out of such programmes;
- Make recommendations for the effective harnessing of current participants' skills in preventing and intervening in Traveller-related conflicts in the future.

Method

This was done by:

- Two focus group interviews with programme participants, one November 2016, one February 2017, complemented by surveys of individual participants;
- Two sets of interviews with tutors at the same time;
- Telephone interviews with stakeholders (steering committee);
- Interviews with those not available for group interviews and those who enlisted but did not complete the course;
- Examination of course documentation.

Acknowledgements

I wish to thank all those who kindly helped in this evaluation through interview, responding to questions and the provision of information.

Aileen O'Brien, coordinator; Thomas McCann, Traveller Counselling Service, tutor, steering committee; Dr Delma Sweeney, tutor; Chris McDonagh, tutor; Catherine O'Connell, tutor; Patty Abozaglo, tutor; Martin Collins, Pavee Point, steering committee; Maura Burke, Laois Offaly ETB, steering committee; Emily Sheary, Restorative Justice in the Community, steering committee; Mags Lovett, Offaly Traveller Movement, steering committee; Kieran Doyle, Kennedy Institute, steering committee; David McInerney, An Garda Síochána, steering committee; and course participants Patrick Reilly; Mary McDonagh, Lily Kavanagh, Christine Joyce, Frank Kavanagh, Christy Moorehouse, Mary McInerney, Bernard Cawley.

1 Set-up

This chapter examines the set-up of the programme with a context (1.1) introduction (1.2), followed by an outline of its establishment (1.3), governance (1.4); the course itself (1.5), and resources allocated (1.6). Conclusions are drawn (1.7).

1.1 Context

There are at least 30,987 Travellers in Ireland. Travellers have a long history, one that is now becoming better known. Travellers were formally recognized as an ethnic minority recently. They have, though, suffered from and continue to endure discrimination, poverty, social exclusion, limited educational opportunities, hardship in accommodation, the labour market and poor health, issues which have been well documented and will not be repeated here.¹ Travellers suffered grievously from cutbacks to education and training during the austerity régime introduced after the financial crisis of 2008.²

Organizations working with the Traveller community date to the 1960s and over time took the form of groups concerned with advocacy, accommodation, education, health, women, services and community development, ranging from small, local groups to national, representative organizations. Many evolved into self-help organizations working to principles of community development. In recent years, specialized organizations emerged to deal with particular issues in the community, (e.g. Traveller Counselling Service). One set of organizations emerged to address the need for mediation services, both for conflict within the Traveller community (sometimes termed 'feuding') and between the Traveller and settled communities (for example over such flashpoint issues as accommodation).³ The Report of the Task Force on the Travelling Community (1995) specifically identified the need for mediation as part of a strategy of reconciliation between the two communities. Pavee Point subsequently (1996-9) trained 15 Travellers in mediation, putting the idea of such a service on the agenda.

The Midlands Traveller Conflict Mediation Initiative (MTCMI) was set up in 2009 under the aegis of Traveller Interagency Groups responsible for counties Offaly, Westmeath, Longford and Laois with a view to responding to problems of volatile inter-Traveller relationships there.⁴ Based in Tullamore, the initiative subsequently developed as a service working with a range of voluntary and statutory bodies to provide mediation case referrals so as to prevent, manage and transform conflict peacefully and effectively.⁵ Between January 2014 and December 2015, MTCMI completed 81 cases (38 in 2014 and 43 in 2015) had a further 14 current and had

¹ For a demographic picture, see Central Statistics Office: *Census 2011 - profile 7: religion, ethnicity and Irish Travellers*; and *Census 2016: 6: Ethnicity and Irish Travellers*, Dublin and Cork, 2011, 2016; for a social and political context, see Pavee Point: *Irish Travellers and Roma, shadow report - response to Ireland's third and fourth report on the International Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD)*. Dublin, author, 2011.

² Pavee Point: *Travelling with austerity*. Dublin, author, 2014.

³ For an opinion, see McDonagh, Rosaleen: *Traveller feuding feeds routine racist stereotyping*. *Irish Times*, 17th April 2014.

⁴ *Working toward peace - report on the Midlands Traveller Conflict and Mediation Initiative*. Traveller Interagency Programme, 2011.

⁵ For its early work, see *Interim report on the Midlands Traveller Conflict Management Initiative; Working toward peace - report on the Midlands Traveller Conflict and Mediation Initiative*; McCarthy, Owen: *Violent conflict in the Traveller community - a collaborative review*. Dublin, Pobal, 2010, 2011, 2012.

delivered a range of capacity-building programmes to better equip Travellers to respond to and address conflict.⁶ Like similar initiatives, it works within principles of community development and restorative justice.⁷

1.2 Introduction

At a two-day conflict training workshop hosted by MTCMI in 2014, attended by members of the Traveller community in Offaly and Westmeath, it was agreed that, granted that the best people to resolve conflicts within the Traveller community were Travellers themselves, specific, structured training should be developed to enable Travellers acquire the skills and knowledge to act as mediators in their own community.

This took the form of a multi-partnership initiative of MTCMI, supported by Restorative Justice in the Community (RJC), funded by the Department of Justice and Equality, hosted by the HSE Dublin Mid Leinster Health Promotion & Improvement Service and involving the Kennedy Institute of the National University of Ireland Maynooth (NUIM) and the Kildare and Wicklow Education and Training Board (ETB).⁸ It is committed to, in its words, 'working in partnership with Travellers and other relevant agencies and groups to help to prevent conflicts from escalating and to intervene effectively in situations where conflict is already an issue'. An inter-agency steering group was established 15th September 2015 to promote and guide the initiative.⁹ The formal objective, agreed at its first meeting, was 'to deliver a culturally inclusive programme on mediation and conflict'. The programme commenced in March 2016 and was completed in March 2017. The aim of the programme was:

Overall: To provide participants with a theoretical understanding and practical skills in the area of conflict, in an interactive learning environment, to facilitate an increased capacity in the Traveller community both to prevent the escalation of conflict and to intervene effectively in a range of Traveller-related conflict situations.
Specifically:

- To equip students with skills and competencies to analyze, apply, and bring methodologies and skills to conflict situations in the community.
- To provide ongoing guidance and support to the participants both during their training and in their emerging conflict intervention and mediation work.

⁶ MTCMI: *Annual report, 2015*. Tullamore, author, 2016. It now has a record of 78 mediation cases.

⁷ Probation Service: *Restorative Justice Strategy*. Dublin, author, 2013; National Commission on Restorative Justice: *Interim report*. Dublin, author, 2008.

⁸ Its formal title is the Edward M Kennedy Institute for Conflict Intervention, named after the famous senator for Massachusetts, Edward M Kennedy (1932-2009) and brother of President John F Kennedy and Robert F Kennedy.

⁹ The steering group comprised Thomas McCann (Traveller Counselling Service); Mags Lovett (Offaly Traveller Movement); Emily Sheary (Restorative Justice in the Community); Maura Burke (Laois Offaly ETB); Susan Cullinane (Kildare Wicklow ETB); Dr Delma Sweeney (Kennedy Institute); Martin Collins (Pavee Point); Cathleen McDonagh (Exchange House); Michael McDonagh (Navan Travellers); Kieran Doyle (Kennedy Institute); Chris McDonagh (MTCMI) and Aileen O'Brien (MTCMI). Clare Cowley (Kennedy Institute intern) acted as minutes secretary. Colette Tuohy (WM Community Development) and PJ Dooley (Kildare Travellers) were original members but subsequently left, while David McInerney (Garda Diversity Office) and Bernard Joyce (Irish Traveller Movement) joined.

- To support the sustainability of the initiative, through introducing the concept to the agencies and networks working with Travellers.
- To carry out evaluative, action research during the lifetime of the project to track and assess the training process and outcomes and the post-training conflict intervention practices.

The expected outcome was:

Increased capacity in the Traveller community both to prevent the escalation of conflict and to intervene effectively in a range of conflict situations involving Travellers (e.g Traveller-Traveller; Traveller-settled; Traveller-agency).

1.3 Establishment

It was important that the course be delivered at the highest possible educational level, hence the involvement of a university, the one most proximate to the project. The programme drew on a level 5 course approved by Quality and Qualifications in Ireland (QQI) originally developed by the Southside Partnership and Dun Laoghaire VEC. The Kennedy Institute hosted and supported the programme. The project welcomed the credibility and status which it brought.

Recruitment for the course took the form of:

- Information sessions, held in Mullingar (11th November 2015) and NUIM (9th December);
- Provision of fliers to promote interest, as well as advertisement in other outlets (e.g. Activelink, Irish Traveller Movement e-newsletter);
- An application process, opening 9th December, with a closing date of 22nd January 2016, with each applicant asked to file a one-page form asking for reasons for interest in the course;
- Interviews (two days of interviews by a panel comprising the Kennedy Institute, ETB and Traveller representative).

The first information meeting attracted 26 participations of whom 18 were Travellers, with a good gender balance. The meeting raised practical issues, such as literacy levels, course methods, supports, garda vetting, venue and child-minding. The information sessions were important in concluding that the course must be recognized, accredited and of good quality; that personal development and trust-building were an important element; and that literacy and other supports be included for those requiring them. The promoters decided to seek:

- People who had shown a commitment to look for alternatives to violence;
- People who might have experience of dealing with conflicts;
- Gender balance (acknowledging the fact that both men and women must be involved, although their roles as conflict interveners might be somewhat different);
- Literacy and other supports built in so as not to exclude otherwise good candidates;
- Commitment to 80% attendance and assignment completion;
- Agreement to engage respectfully with all other participants during the programme; and
- Honest commitment to apply the learning from the programme.

A single-page application form was devised, which sought personal details and asked questions such as: *How do you think the course will benefit you? How do you think you may be able to use the lessons learned by the end of the course?*

The interview process involved 12 questions. There was a standard assessment and marking form. Two achieved the top marks (20/20), most 15 or so, the lowest 10. A small number was identified as requiring literacy support. Applicants were expected to sign a learning contract committing to the course objectives.

37 applications were received and 21 applicants came to interview on the two-day interview dates of 8-10th February 2016, all of whom were accepted. The main drop-off was a group of 12 applicants from Offaly and Tipperary who preferred to wait for a more proximate training programme to be provided in 2017. In the event, 16 started. Participants ranged from those who had completed QQI courses to others with little formal education and who might find the course more challenging. The participants comprised older and younger Travellers. There was good gender balance. Many participants had inter-familial connections and two were sisters. Several worked in Traveller organizations (e.g. as primary healthcare workers). Some of the participants had been informally engaged in mediation work already and a small number had even found themselves in conflictual situations. All were well known and regarded within their communities.

There was no formal audit of skill levels, but it quickly became apparent that they crossed a wide range. Some were very experienced with computers, while others had almost no such experience.

1.4 Governance

The different elements of the partnership had distinct tasks. The role of the MTCMI was to coordinate recruitment and provide subsequent support to course participants. The role of the Kennedy Institute, with MTCMI, was to coordinate delivery of the programme; provide tutors and classrooms; and supply an intern for two days a week from September - July for research and documentation. The role of the ETB was to fund the tutors, provide QQI \$5 accreditation, enrol the students through the Back to Education Initiative, provide literacy support for those needing it and the accommodation used for the 2016 classes, located in the town of Maynooth.

The programme was governed by a steering committee meeting quarterly, chaired by MTCMI coordinator Aileen O'Brien. There were no formal terms of reference, but it had an advisory role, supported the staff, exercised oversight, promoted the initiative, helped with the recruitment of tutors and served the function of bringing together all the stakeholders.¹⁰ In addition to the steering committee, there was:

- Programme Steering Group, also called the 'working group' and later called the 'working group and tutor meetings', hosted by MTCMI. This comprised the tutors, MTCMI, Kennedy Institute and Kildare & Wicklow ETB to coordinate and oversee course content and its delivery and implementation.¹¹

¹⁰ Meetings were held on 15th September 2015, 18th November, 19th January 2016, 9th March, 6th July, 13th September, 18th October.

¹¹ Notes of its meetings are available for 15th September; 18th November 2015 (Programme Working Group), 11th February 2016 (Working Group), 22nd February (Tutor Group), 22nd March, 7th June (Working Group and Tutors). A meeting was also called for 3rd May.

- Research sub-group drawn from the steering group, coordinated by the Kennedy Institute, to which was attached an intern provided by the Institute to track and record.¹² Its role was to 'capture moments in time at varying stages of the research, monitor if any changes have taken place within the Traveller community and assess if mediation training is facilitating this change'.¹³ One of its specific tasks was to steer the process of ethical approval in NUIM, although this was not brought to a conclusion and pursue accreditation with the Mediators Institute of Ireland, which was successful.

In practice, these two groups functioned only during the earlier part of the programme and the steering committee was the principal oversight body.

1.5 The course

The course was in two parts: in 2016, two 5 module courses (conflict resolution and intercultural studies) and in 2017, certified mediation training under the curriculum of the Mediation Institute of Ireland, leading to the professional qualification of mediator. The 2016 programme took the form of two 5 module courses: Conflict Resolution (CR) (5N0692) and Inter-Cultural (IC) studies (5N0765). Each course was governed by a prospectus which outlines the course objectives, intended learning outcomes, indicative content, assessment guidelines and marking systems.¹⁴ The course was anticipated at 80 to 100hr classroom time, delivered as a course day every 30 weeks, with 20% delivered by guest tutors. It was decided that the course should take the form of two semesters on Wednesdays, the typical programme being:

10.30 - 12.30	Morning session (with brief break)
12.30	Lunch (provided)
1pm-4pm	Afternoon session (with brief break).

The course began with what is called the 'access programme', a two-day orientation and start-off event on 2nd and 9th March 2016 which comprised a getting-to-know-you session, trust-building and ground rules.¹⁵ The course then ran to June 2016, when students were given summer assignments, resumed in September 2016 to 7th December (annex 2). For those students wishing to complete the Mediation Institute of Ireland accreditation, there was a six-week programme over January-March 2017. Three participants left the course over summer 2016, principally due to family and health reasons and the autumn core was about 10-12 with 7 completing the QQI course and 6 completing the certified mediation training as well.

The course relied heavily on group discussion, with minimal formal teaching. Students were encouraged to study in between, for example by research on the internet. A reading list was provided. The Education and Training Board required

¹² Mags Lovett, Emily Sheary, Maura Burke, Thomas McCann, Dr Delma Sweeney, Michael McDonagh, Aileen O'Brien.

¹³ It met on 18th November 2015; 22nd January; and 5th April and 3rd May. Minutes are available for 18th November and 5th April.

¹⁴ Kildare and Wicklow Education & Training Board: *Programme module for conflict resolution leading to level 5 FETAC - conflict resolution 5N0692*, 14pp; and *Programme module for intercultural studies leading to level 5 FETAC - conflict resolution 5N0765*. 16pp, 2012.

¹⁵ The ground rules were defined as: *Respect other people's opinions; One person to speak at a time; Listen to one another; What is said in the room stays in the room; Phones off or on silent; Respect boundaries and be responsible for what we say; Be sensitive to other people's situations; Observe the timetable; Make the course a positive and enjoyable experience; Suggest and participate* (minor editing for brevity).

the completion of a portfolio, hence the use of worksheets and assignments. The course was expected to set down a strong theoretical base of knowledge and did not compromise with academic standards.

Worksheets were used extensively, for example *Exploring conflict, Alternatives to conflict* (CR module); *Irish Traveller culture, Culture and identity* (IC module), with students marked afterwards on completion. Assignments were done during the course, normally in the form of a powerpoint, two-page traditional essay or presentation with photographs, examples being *Pride, conflict, community development* (choice between three) (IC module); *Introduction to conflict, Alternative approaches to conflict resolution, Understanding conflict and restorative approaches* (CR module). They were marked 50% for the development of the chosen theme and 50% for creativity. Assignments could be done in pairs, with the understanding that the awarded mark be shared equally and could be done in the form of presentations.

Longer assignments were issued on 22nd June for the summer, with a completion date of 14th September. In the conflict resolution module, participants were invited to describe a conflict situation in which they had been involved, looking at the reasons for the conflict, what happened, the different perspectives, who was affected and how the situation could be handled differently and learning arising. This was more extensive than the previous assignments and 1,500 - 1,600 words were expected. In the intercultural studies module, participants were invited to examine the situation of one of three minority groups (Irish Travellers, non-nationals and non-catholic religious groups) and explore it in relation to the dominant culture.

In practical sessions, participants were marked according to their skills demonstrated, such as clear communications (e.g. active listening, non-accusatory statements, communicating feelings appropriately); exchanging feedback (e.g. articulation of views, careful listening, analysis of argument and values) and use of language to de-escalate conflict (re-phrasing, re-framing, making observations without interpretation). Participants were also asked to complete a *Learner record* of 800-1,000 words covering five themes: culture; prejudice and stereotyping; media, interculturalism and legislation. For feedback, forms were circulated and collated for each course day, being subsequently made available to the evaluator. These asked a template of questions (> chapter 2). There was one group session, a focus group held on 22nd June to review the course up to that point, with the results also collated.

The certified mediation training comprised eight days over January - March 2017, with the requirement for a 2,000 word project. A certification programme was developed by Dr Delma Sweeney and submitted this to the Mediation Institute of Ireland Accreditation Board where it was approved it for certification. It was not culturally specific to the Traveller community. In practice, this course built on and consolidated the learning from the previous year. The lectures were held this time in the Kennedy Institute in the NUIM north campus. The course concluded with a formal assessment on 8th March 2017.

1.6 Resources

The human resources for the programme comprise staffing, the steering committee, the working group and tutors meeting and the research committee. First, the staffing:

MTCMI programme coordinator
Aileen O'Brien

MTCMI mediator

Chris McDonagh

Intercultural studies module

Core tutor: Thomas McCann

Associate tutor: Michael McDonagh

Conflict resolution module

Core tutor: Dr Delma Sweeney

Associate tutors: Catherine O'Connell, Patty D'Abozaglo

Visiting tutors/speakers/literacy and IT support tutors

David McInerney (An Garda Siochana), Phyllida Clarke, Martin Collins (Pavee Point), Padraig MacLochlainn, Ali Hanaf, Joe Bergin & Louise Quinn (KWETB)

Kennedy Institute

Intern (to July 2016): Clare Cowley

Details of the committees in the governance structure were provided above (>1.2, 1.4). The steering committee met seven times, the working group and tutors meeting eight times and the research committee three times. The course does not publish or estimate the human resources committed to this programme. These are substantial, if we look at the experience of the staff and - even allowing for overlap between them - the three committees that underpin the project.

There is no self-contained budget for the course. In practice, it is run as a strand of work within the MTCMI, formally hosted by Restorative Justice in the Community, with a considerable level of in-kind contributions from the partner organizations and others, the elements of where were as follows:

- Teaching rooms, provided by the ETB in the town of Maynooth;
- Travel, subsistence and extra tutor costs provided by MTCMI to June 2016, there after by St Stephen's Green Trust (SSGT) from September to December (€2,500);
- Tutor expenses, including guest tutors, provided by the ETB at a rate of €35/hr;
- Department of Justice and Equality Traveller & Roma unit: part of two posts, but no additional costs for their involvement in this course;¹⁶
- Income support for participants through the Back to Education Initiative (BTEI);
- Tutoring time, given *pro bono* for January-March 2017;
- Folders supplied by the ETB and Kennedy Institute;
- Evaluation funded by the Midlands Traveller Health Unit.

Operating costs of the course to were estimated at:

Student travel	€4,773.50
Student lunches	€1,605.19

¹⁶ Aileen O'Brien, Chris McDonagh.

Tutors	€2,620
Evaluation	€2,460
Assessor fees	
Glencree event	€350
Mediators registration	€275
Video for assessments	€270.78
Room hire	€100
Travel for intern	€100
Total	€ 13,534.47¹⁷

Whereas this may be a useful guide to how the course is constructed, financially speaking, it greatly under-estimates the true cost of a stand-alone course of this nature which must be at least double these figures.

1.7 Conclusions

This course takes place in the context of the development, over the past twenty years, of conflict mediation work with the Traveller community in Ireland, one in which MTCMI has almost ten years of experience. The programme has been two years in design, has clearly defined objectives and is hosted by a broad-based multi-agency partnership. The course was launched in autumn 2015 with two information meetings, followed by an application process and then induction of the participants in March 2016. The course was a two-semester programme, divided into intercultural studies and conflict studies and relied on informal methods. It was a demanding course, with regular assessment and marking procedures, worksheets and assignments. A governance structure was in put place, the principal element being a steering committee that served the functions of oversight, planning, coordination and accountability. There was a substantial investment of human resources in the form of the time of the coordinator, mediator, two core tutors, three associate tutors, three visiting tutors and an intern. There is no stand-alone budget for the course and although costing of the project has been estimated at over €13,500, this understates the actual value in the form of significant in kind benefits supplied by MTCMI, the ETB, NUIM and others. A final comment is that this was a well-documented project. Although there are some gaps in the paper trail, there is a substantial record of how the course was constructed, minutes of the steering committee, listed objectives, the applications process, formalized ground rules, the curriculum and assessment systems. Feedback forms were used for each session, with an end-of-semester focus group. Construction of the course appears to have been careful, thorough, democratic and systematically planned.

We can now conclude with a timeline for the course (table 1):

Table 1: Timeline

	Organization	Course

¹⁷ My thanks for Emily Sheary for calculating and providing this information.

	Organization	Course
September 2015	15: Steering Group (1) 15: Programme Working Group	
November	11: Information day, Mullingar 18: Steering Group (2) 18 : Programme Working Group 18: Research committee	
December	9: Information day, NUIM 9: Open applications	
January 2016	19: Steering group (3) 22: Closing date for applications	
February	9-10: Interviews 11: Working group 22: Tutor Group	
March	9: Steering group (4) 9: Research committee 14: Course preparation 22: Working group and tutors 30: Course preparation	2: Access day (1) 9: Access day (2)
April	5: Research group 11: Working group and tutors	5 (pilot), 20, 27
May	3: Research group 3: Working group and tutors	4, 11, 18, 25
June	7: Working group and tutors 22: Course focus group	15, 22 29: Glencree Assignments issued
July	5: Steering group (5) 18-19: Working group/tutor meeting	
Summer break		
September	13 Sep: Steering group (6)	7 (start autumn term), 14, 21, 28
October	18 Oct: Steering group (7)	5, 12 (Glencree), 19, 26
November	16: Focus group with evaluator	9, 16, 23, 30
December		7 (finish term)
January 2017	Start MII course	
February	15: Focus group with evaluator	
March	8: Conclude course	8: Assessment
May	Graduation	

2 Experience and outcomes for participants

Chapter 2 records the experiences and outcomes of the participants. First, real-time feedback was available from the course on a day-by-day basis (2.1); then, end-of-course feedback (2.2) and the perspectives of the tutors and steering committee (2.3). The chapter examines the expected impacts (2.4) and issues of governance (2.5) before conclusions are drawn (2.6).

2.1 Real-time feedback

As noted in chapter 1, feedback forms were collected from each course day, asking the following questions *What was most helpful? What was least helpful? What changes would you propose?* A focus group was held on 22nd June to review the course up to that point and the results also collated. Although they do not reflect the relative strength of views expressed, these are important real-time indicators of participant experience and are reviewed here under their respective headings.

What was most helpful?

Participants were positive about the topics addressed each day. They most welcomed those parts that were about Travellers and delivered by Traveller speakers. They commended those presentations that were delivered clearly, in appropriate language. They especially liked those sessions which included words in the Traveller language (Cant and Gammon) and were well culturally rooted. There was positive comment on the role plays. Participants liked several individual teaching methods, such as quizzes, the use of slides and the use of group discussions, some of which were lively. Several spoke of how they had learned from planning sessions and how to organize their work. One striking comment from the first session in the autumn was from a participant who expressed the feeling that 'this is real and we are going to see it through'. There were many positive comments on individual teachers and particular subjects (e.g. conflict coaching, community development, forgiveness, Somalia). They valued the open nature of the discussions in groups. There was a warm welcome for the Garda contributor, who was described as 'a big hit' and a proposal for more; and much reaction from the session with the gardai in Glencree, which was regarded as honest, informative and constructive.

What was least helpful?

Some feedback forms had no entries under this heading and the volume of criticism was much smaller than the positive accounts. Initially, there was criticism of the language not being Traveller-friendly - but the tutor was later commended for having a much improved knowledge quite quickly. Although role play was welcome, it must be relevant to the Traveller experience. There were two negative comments about class being interrupted by fire alarms; another of a room where it was hard to hear (several comments) with an echo, leading to a request to go back to the old classroom.

What changes would you propose?

There were some sharp comments about the desirability of trainers having more cultural awareness and to have worked with Travellers in conflict situations. They would like more Traveller speakers. There were requests for more video clips, posting comments on flipcharts to facilitate the taking of notes, field trips, case studies, quizzes, and more handouts. They wanted time to talk about research, how

to do it and how to structure it. Some asked for more time on individual topics (e.g. community development, computers). Some proposed a shorter lunch break and earlier finish.

The June focus group, which reviewed the first term of the course, commented positively on the intercultural sessions and where there was criticism, it was that there had been an underestimate of the degree to which mediation work must be adapted to Traveller situations and culture. Participants liked the use of outside speakers. There were requests for more powerpoints, DVDs, handouts and interactive learning methods. Some but not all students found it difficult to deal with some 'big words' which they said should be properly explained.

2.2 End-of-course feedback

Two sets of end-of-course feedback were held with the evaluator: one in a focus group in November 2016, the second in February 2017 (2.2.1-2). The first focus group was supplemented by individual telephone interviews of those unable to attend.

2.2.1 First year

The end-of-course feedback from participants in November was as follows:

- Participants welcomed the course because of the level of conflict in the Traveller community and their desire to make a practical response to build trust therein;
- Critical in persuading them to take part were recommendations by people who they knew (e.g. health care or community development workers) and the reputation of the course organizers. It was especially important that so many Traveller men had been able to attend, since they were the most directly affected by conflict;
- The interview process was positively regarded and considered relaxed. The interviewers did not talk down to them, but engaged, listened and encouraged;
- The induction days were valuable. Participants were made feel welcome. They were not overpowering. Many did not know the other participants and they found it reassuring to know that others had joined for similar reasons;
- Although there were varied levels of expertise in the group, the programme worked to a common level and pace. Some participants felt that they might 'not be educated enough' or feared that they might fail, but others helped them through. There was a lot to take in and some people read faster than others. Language, terms and 'the big words' were a potential barrier, but could be and were overcome if they were always explained and simplified. Once that barrier was past, confidence grew and people talked more between themselves. One spoke of how now being able to use these terms with professionals. The issue of literacy was correctly identified as a potential issue at the start and the more experienced were invited to help those who might find difficulty. One idea might be to run a 'refresher class' during the summer holidays (a contrary view was that the summer break was too long and the course should be shorter);
- They liked the course methods, the emphasis on practical experience and outside speakers. Hearing real-life experiences, the story of one man who 'fought all his life' and the harm done to families made a lasting impression. Drama and role plays were especially important in developing confidence. One person spoke of now being able to speak comfortably to people in authority (e.g. police, teachers), who until then had been 'above us';
- There were warm comments for the organizers and tutors, be that during the course or in providing support in between, such as through telephone calls, e-mails or sitting down with them to help them complete the course. They 'put their heart and soul into it', were accommodating and 'especially helpful to those who needed assistance'. Several said that the course was 'fun, with a great set of people'.

- The course was respectful of Traveller culture and participants felt that they learned more about their own culture. Some of the issues raised were rightly challenging. Inviting other Traveller speakers was one of the most-liked aspects of the course. Traveller tutors were a big help because 'Traveller go to Travellers for help';
- The only problem reported was the temporary relocation to a room in the college with bad acoustics, as well as cold and damp, but they quickly moved back.
- Travel was definitely an issue and if ways could be found to locate the course more centrally in the midlands in future, that would help (e.g. Longford, Tullamore, Kinnegad, with a Dublin-located course for Dublin Travellers);
- Their families were interested in and supportive of their going on their course. Many family members asked about the course. There had been a universal welcome for something that would help stop conflict - it was 'about time'. The course was regarded as challenging: when some were not sure that they would last and stick it out, but their families reminded them that it was a serious, worthwhile undertaking. Participation was seen as prestigious because it was linked to a university.

Participants rated the course as follows (out of ten):

Teachers, lecturers, tutor	9
Atmosphere	9.6
Getting on with other students	9.6
Classrooms	8.4
Organization	8.5
Support from coordinators	<u>9.25</u>
<i>Overall rating</i>	<u>9.4</u>

As may be seen, these are high scores by any standards, 9.4 overall, the highest scores being for 'atmosphere' and 'getting on with other students', the lowest, not surprisingly being the classrooms, where one bad experience dragged the average down.

There had been an issue with one tutor about knowledge of conflict, cultural issues, and role play in the Traveller community, but this was identified at an early stage and quickly resolved. Overall, the course seemed to have the right mixture of being challenging and 'hard work', but was especially valued for its alertness to those who might experience difficulty and needed help.

2.2.2 Certified mediation training

The certified mediation training course covered, in the view of participants, many grounds and issues with which they were now familiar. The difference, though, was that this time, they were more confident, even 'less scared'. With the exam approaching, there was more pressure on, so that last year seemed more relaxing by comparison. Participants sensed that it was still as challenging as ever, but they could manage. The most demanding part was the video work, which because it would be part of the assessment made some participants feel self-conscious and nervous.

Looking back over the course as a whole, they now recognised the substantial commitment involved, both from them and for their families and children. Some participants thought they would never get to the end, but they had. The course had involved a lot of learning. Perhaps the hardest bit had been language, the 'big words', the 'authority words' and the rule was set down that a new word had to be explained before the speaker continued, like 'multi-tasking'. The extensive use of role play was considered one of the best parts of the course, with everyone getting a

turn. Participants felt that they had learned not only individual skills (e.g. reflective learning) but core understandings, which was that mediation was not about solving problems, but asking the right questions that assisted other people to solve theirs. It was a lot more than 'calling in the fair play' man in days long ago. Participants praised the organizers and tutors for their support, understanding and commitment. Participants felt that they had learned a lot about each other and made new friends.

Participants were then preparing their 2,000 word projects, which were case studies of conflict situations between Traveller families, between Travellers and the settled community and about a dispute within a family that got out of hand. They valued the opportunity to document such real-life stories and valued the help and encouragement from tutors in doing so.

All were confident that after the course they would be able to use their new knowledge and skills, for example in schools, youth work or workplace conflict and saw situations in which it would be applicable, for example with social workers or helping the gardai. They were certain that with the qualification, they would be treated more seriously now. There were some subtle gender effects. One of the male participants would be seen as a role model in the community - mediation was now seen as a better route for men to follow rather than conflict; whereas women were now seen to as having a legitimate role in helping to resolve conflict, breaking the tradition whereby whenever there was a dispute, the women stood back and let the men sort it out.

Their families and friends had continued to ask them about their progress during the course. One or two had doubted that they would they finish the course or that it would be of value, but it was. They felt that the time had 'flown past'. They were confident that other people in their communities would step forward for future courses and told them "if I can do it, anyone can".

The February focus group was asked to re-rate last year's course and the certified mediation training course. They re-rated last year's course at 8.5 and the certified mediation course at 9.7. When asked did they find the certified mediation training course more or less difficult than the previous year's course, or about the same, one said more difficult, two less difficult and one about the same. For a future course, their principal recommendation was to move away from the one course module in the morning, the other in the afternoon: better one block at a time, starting with cultural awareness.

2.3 Tutor and steering committee perspectives

Tutors and steering committee members provided feedback, both in a small focus group and individually, which complements the perspectives of the participants. Tutors found that:

- Students engaged very fully on the course, were enthused and 'did not hold back' their views or energies;
- Tutors were struck by the energy, commitment, openness, courage and motivation of the students. They were 'very honest and mature about their capacities'. There was a real desire to use the course to break the cycle of fighting in the Traveller community;
- The group was nervous at first, students meeting people they had not met before. They were soon observed to talk to each other, to laugh and to have fun;
- They were conscious of the importance of meeting the needs of all in the group, especially those with lower literacy levels, by adjusting their methods, such as the use of visual information, general discussion (about 50% of time), with as little formal lecturing as possible. They ensured that these students got extra help, but students were observed to help each other, be that on computer skills or other aspects of the course. In the end, most of the group moved together.
- Despite the different skill levels, it became a cohesive group and people did get on with one another. Over time, the quieter ones joined in more and more.
- There was a strong response to the intercultural module. It was a real opportunity for participants to learn more about Traveller culture, music, stories, language, who the original 'tinkers' were and so on;
- The growth in confidence of students over the year was visible, as were their skills as listeners and in presenting their own ideas.
- The ETB was commended for the way in which it organized the classrooms, parking, the tea room and being welcoming. This made a big difference.

According to one tutor, the delivery of the course benefitted from the substantial effort that went into its design and the creation of a supportive teaching environment. Assignments could be tackled a number of different ways and this was typical of the advance thought given to course methods. Small details, 'such as putting up new terms on a flipchart at the very start', mattered. Thought and care went into issues of language and terminology.

Asked to assess the course toward the end of the certified mediation training, tutors confirmed the 'more serious' atmosphere as the assessment approached. Most of the students were managing well, but they were not all at the same level, some being very capable whereas one or two caused concern. They observed how students did help each other. They were confident that they would be alright in the end and were comfortable with the video experience. They had come a long way from having no formal knowledge of mediation at the start to their present skill levels. They had observed confidence levels rise as the year had progressed. According to one, 'they came on in leaps and bounds and really got it'. They were confident that they would all become mediators afterwards and keep up their affiliation fee, even though it cost €150. Not only would they be mediators in their own community, but there was no reason why some should not further afield. They were hopeful that some of those who had started the course the previous year would come back this time and complete it. As for a future course, they would like to be able to provide more illustrative tools, such as video clips like Youtube that brought mediation alive.

Pacing of the course emerged as an issue in both groups. Although several argued for a shorter course, one tutor was of the view that a year was the right length, because 'it takes a long time to let ideas settle' and 'it takes time to internalize'. A contrary view was that '20 sessions over a year was too long: why not 20 over eight weeks? Reduce the time between application, interview and course start?' An alternative was to reshape it around the traditional university year (September - June).

Members of the steering committee heard feedback about the course from the Traveller community and colleagues during the year. This is what they said:

- The course was considered to be both informative (e.g. theory of conflict) and to provide practical skills. Content and method had both been well received;
- Participants had grown in confidence as the year progressed;
- The message had got out that mediation was not about solving people's problems for them, but about helping people to solve their own problems;
- Travel was a definite stress on the course. Some drivers brought a number of colleagues to the course, but that could put the driver under pressure.

2.4 Expected impacts

A key question in the programme is the degree to which and the way in which students will apply the skills and knowledge that they had developed during the course - the expected impacts. Participants were certain that they had indeed gained in knowledge and skill. A knowledge gain was that most people did not want to stay in conflict, but could not admit it and had to be helped to find ways to do so: mediation was not just about stopping violence, but finding common ground and solutions. Skills gained were about being neutral in conflict, recognizing one's own biases, being seen to be not on one side or the other, knowing the right questions to ask, how to listen, the importance of body language, patience, knowing when *not* to speak, how to really hear what people were saying, distinguishing between hurt and anger, how to stay calm. One spoke of the small, practical things like 'if you are nodding your head you have to make it clear that this might be because you are listening rather than that you agree with what they say'. People did now feel more confident about going into a conflict situation, be that in their local community, in youth groups, or even with men in prison (some had already spoken to prisoners in Castlereagh).

There were several ways in which the skills and knowledge gained might be applied. Some of the participants were already involved in addressing conflict in their communities and it was expected that they would continue to do so. As one tutor put it, 'some *will* go on to be mediators and contribute to assisting in high-visibility disputes and put themselves in the line of fire, but not all will'. One estimate was that about three would have a good capacity to do so. It was quite possible that as soon as a list was compiled of qualified negotiators, then the authorities (e.g. gardai) would know who to call for assistance in resolving conflict. It was important to look forward to establishing a formal system for mediation interventions e.g. a panel of part and full-time, with people on retainer and or paid by hours and expenses - 'pilot this for a year' one recommended. This should be in the new inclusion strategy.

It was possible that not all will put their skills and knowledge to immediate use, but for them it was still a valid and useful learning experience. Opportunities might arise later, such as, putting their skills to use in negotiating with state services or in resolving issues *within* families.

Ideally some participants would apply their skills and knowledge not only within the Traveller community but further afield, 'after all, these skills are applicable to any community conflict situation'. It was important that Traveller mediators be seen as equal, respected and as professional as any other mediator.

2.5 Organization and governance

The organization and governance of the course were explained in chapter 1. How well did it work? Members of the steering committee were invited to share their views on the quality of organization and governance around the course in general and the role of the committee in particular. This is what they said:

- The steering committee had correctly fulfilled its overall steering function and had not got involved at an inappropriate level of management;
- It was at its greatest value during the set-up stage: the establishment of the course, recruitment and interview process, in thrashing out the practical issues in advance (e.g. literacy needs);
- The committee itself functioned well. People felt confident they could contribute freely and have their say. There was a good level of participation. The atmosphere was open, positive and informal and the discussions respectful of other points of view.
- Technically, the committee worked well, was well chaired, documentation was clear, sufficient and arrived on time. Meetings were well run. One found the meetings too long and 'could be tighter' but that was the only reservation;
- The committee had the important stakeholders on board, people with expertise who knew the field. There was a good mixture of people on the committee: Travellers, settled people; the relevant institutions; people of high knowledge and experience from the Traveller community. One gap was insufficient representation of Traveller women and their organizations. There was scope for the representation of other organizations (e.g. Exchange House), although it was realised that their capacity may be limited at present;
- Several raised questions as to whether there was a need for some additional funding for childcare, transport (e.g. a minibus) and lunches.

One commented on how there were strong personalities there and different viewpoints, but they were resolved amicably. The attendance was about 75%, which was reasonable under the circumstances.

2.6 Conclusions

It was possible to construct a picture of the course from real-time feedback, focus groups and interviews with participants, tutors and members of the steering committee. There was a high level of consistency between the different groups. The principal conclusions were:

- Participants had learned both practical skills and knowledge from the course. They had enjoyed the course, the atmosphere was positive and they had worked well as a group. The course rating at the first focus group was a high 9.4. The revised final rating was lower, but the mediation course was rated even higher, 9.7.
- The transition into the mediation course appears to have been seamless, with the students consolidating their learning, writing a 2,000 word paper and preparing video presentations. The atmosphere was more concentrated as the final exam approached.
- Considerable effort appeared to have been front-loaded into the course at the very beginning in order to ensure a good design of methods and approaches. This seems to have been a major contributor to its success. The approach taken to interviews and induction got the course off to a good start. Attention to detail over such matters as the venue also paid off;
- There were mixed abilities within the group. Again, this was anticipated from the start and efforts were devoted to ensure that those with less literacy skills could maintain the pace. The decision to explain terms and 'the big words' from the start was absolutely right;
- Although one of the big concerns had been whether the course would give sufficient respect to Traveller culture and perspectives, the decision to devote half the course to the intercultural model, coupled with Traveller tutors and guest speakers, ensured that this aspect was successful.
- The course had the ability to identify and rectify problems, such as the poor classroom allocation and one quickly corrected issue with one tutor;
- The steering committee appears to have fulfilled its oversight role well, with good working methods and the right combination of people and skills. Its most valuable role was in the set-up stage when it anticipated some of the many issues that might arise. There was scope for the representation of Traveller women's organizations;
- Participants were able to identify and itemize the the knowledge and skills that they had taken from the course, especially the *how to* of being a mediator. They had gained significantly in confidence.
- The expected outcomes would be that some participants would go on to be mediators in conflict situations. Some might not apply their skills immediately, or might do so in different ways, such as negotiation with state agencies and internal family issues. Ultimately, some would go on to a broader role as professional mediator beyond the Traveller community. There was merit in the establishment of a panel of mediators and its promotion.

3 Issues arising and recommendations

This chapter examines the issues arising from the course, first in general (3.1), education (3.2), the completion rate (3.3), the university setting (3.4) and some follow-up issues (3.5). Recommendations are made (3.6).

3.1 General

First, the experience of the course vindicated the course design. There is a good basis for replicating and extending the course in other ETBs. Leaving aside the practical work which trained mediators may do afterwards, for the individual participants, the course confirmed the principle of accredited learning as a stepping stone to professional practice. There was a strong agreement that this course was most important for the Traveller community in Ireland and held out the promise of dealing with long-standing problems of inter-familial conflict in a structured way. As one participant put it, 'ten years ago, there was no discussion on mediation as a method or structured ways to deal with conflict'. The potential of the course should not be underestimated.

The steering committee appears to have worked well and may have made a decisive contribution to the set up of the course. Three changes may be considered:

- If the committee is to continue to be involved in the oversight of the course, it might be useful to formalize its terms of reference;
- There may be value in extending membership in the first instance to Traveller women's organizations and others (e.g. Exchange House);
- The course is funded and supported through a number of mechanisms and organizations, which works, but makes it difficult to obtain a true assessment of the financial and human resources attributed to the course - and which may be underestimated as a result. It would be important, for the future, that it have a stand-alone budget that would be a true assessment of the human and financial resources committed to the course.

3.2 Educational

The prime focus of this evaluation has been on the delivery of the course, so inevitably the educational experience has attracted the most attention and is obviously the foremost concern of the participants. As noted earlier, the course achieved high ratings for the knowledge and information imparted, the skills learned, the atmosphere created, the dynamics of the group and the methods applied. Ensuring cultural sensitivity, a concern before the course, appears to have been achieved by the success of the intercultural module. The tutors provided a high level of support and the course was sensitive to the mixed abilities of the group. Issues of language were dealt with at an early stage. Continuous feedback was built into the course. The success of any educational course is an outcome of those issues that did *not* become problems as much as those that did and this course appears to have been exceptional in anticipating and addressing potential problem issues.

The principal opinions emerging concerned duration, seasonality, sequencing and location for the course. There were mixed views as to whether the duration should be shorter but more intensive to facilitate completion, or kept to the present length, which was desirable to give sufficient time for students to assimilate course materials. On seasonality, there was a majority view in favour of a course that paralleled the academic term (September - June). On sequencing, the final group of course participants favoured running the cultural module and conflict module

sequentially, rather than in tandem. On location, many favoured a venue that was nearer than Maynooth. These opinions should inform the design of the next course.

3.3 Completion rate

The completion rate was an issue. First, of those accepted at interview, about 12 dropped out before the start, principally for reasons of distance. Of the 16 remaining, only six finished. Several interviews were carried out with those who left the course. Those who contributed all left the course because of overwhelming work or family reasons. They did find the commitment to the course demanding but it was generally an unanticipated factor that precipitated their exit. None of this group left because of a problem with the course - to the contrary, they liked it, spoke warmly of the course and would value the opportunity to go back. It was acknowledged that the course literature had always, rightly, stressed the nature of the commitment, so people knew what was involved. One participant spoke of the importance of having a parent or sponsoring organization giving support to participants to attend and understood that this was more difficult for smaller organizations. Those who had a strong parent organization were much more likely to finish than those who had only a weak organization or none at all. It was especially harder to get men involved and they were more likely to leave. Issues of commitment did arise during the interview and it was important that this continue to be a formal part of the process. One person pointed out that 'a day a week for a year is a big commitment. Did all realize what was involved? Some may not have.'

The drop-out rate was, for those familiar with comparable courses, within normal limits, where there are often sudden work commitments and family issues that must be promptly addressed. Another comment was that this completion rate was normal for people have not had lengthy prior educational experience. One person asked whether if a small fee were paid then students were more likely to stay, as fee-paid courses universally have higher attendance than free courses.

It is difficult to reach a definitive view here that would be useful for future courses. Perhaps the most useful advice that can be offered is, in the recruitment process, to encourage candidates to arrange in advance to get the support of Traveller organizations with which they may be associated, so that their understanding, encouragement and support can be obtained in advance.

3.4 The course in a university setting

Although the course is hosted by NUIM's Kennedy Institute, it is technically an ETB course which means that participants are not students at the university. They are not issued with student cards and do not have automatic access to library or other facilities (e.g. sports). This is an unsatisfactory situation which means that the connection to third level is only half-recognized. Comments from participants indicated that they liked the university environment. There is merit in the proposition that the role of NUIM have more formal recognition, with the students issued student cards. The 'extra mile' for NUIM to go to make this possible would be small compared to the benefit of recognition for the students as having fully completed a course at third level on the same basis as other students. As one informant said, 'it is illogical that participants are not formally students and it would be a good thing to do'. This would require some form of protocol to be adopted at NUIM, but there appears to be time to make this change before a successor course.

3.5 Follow-up issues

Two follow-up issues arise. The first is suggested by 2.4 *Expected impacts*, which is to test what have been the outcomes, several years from now, for those who completed the course. In other words, there is scope for a short follow-up longitudinal study of the manner in which those who completed the course subsequently became involved in mediation in the Traveller community and indeed further afield. This could be done initially at a three-year point from now, in 2020.

Second, granted the success of this as a first course, there may be merit in thinking of a textbook on Traveller mediation. This could draw on the teaching materials of this course, the external contributions and case studies taken, with permission, from student papers. This could start as a printed handbook and then evolve into a more formal textbook. The importance and value of the course suggests that both its status and practical value would merit its elevation to such a level. It may be possible to obtain separate funding for this.

3.6 Recommendations

A first recommendation would normally concern whether and how such a course should be followed. Events may have already overtaken such a recommendation, for it is understood that there will be a follow-up programme with Laois Offaly ETB. This envisages advertising and recruitment in April-May 2017, the access programme in June 2017 and the course beginning in September, more in line with the standard academic schedule. This course has been successful and there is indeed a firm basis for it being replicated by other ETBs. Questions remain as to the appropriate duration, seasonality, sequencing and location which merit further discussion. A number of specific recommendations arise from this research:

- For the steering committee - or future such committee - consideration be given to formal terms of reference, extending membership and a stand-alone budget.
- The completion rate was the most concerning issue and while most of those involved felt that it was within acceptable limits, there may be scope for ensuring stronger organizational support for individual participants.
- There is merit in the course being more firmly acknowledged by the issuing of student cards and a certification process.
- The promotion - with their agreement - of qualified mediators as a panel whose members may be asked to assist in mediation situations;
- There should be a small longitudinal study in 2020 to test for impact and for the beginning of a course textbook.

Annex : Course dates and content

Spring term

Date	Theme
2 March Access day 1	AM: Introductions (Aileen O'Brien, Patty Abozaglo, Catherine O'Connell) PM: Introduction to conflict work
9 March Access day 2	AM: Ground rules; what is conflict? (Thomas McCann, Catherine O'Connell) PM: Introduction to culture and Traveller culture
6 April	AM: Introduction to conflict resolution module (CR: Delma Sweeney) PM: Introduction to intercultural studies (IC: Thomas McCann)
13 April	AM: Retributive and restorative justice (CR: Delma Sweeney) PM: Arbitration, negotiation and mediation (CR: Delma Sweeney)
20 April	AM: Culture, identity, values and norms (IC: Michael McDonagh) PM: Values, interests and needs in conflict (CR: Delma Sweeney)
27 April	AM: Cultural milestones (IC: Michael McDonagh) PM: Conflict through a cultural lens (IC: Thomas McCann)
4 May	AM: Listening skills (CR: Delma Sweeney) PM: David McLnerney, Garda Intercultural Office
11 May	AM: Conflict through a cultural lens (IC: Thomas McCann) PM: Conflict, values, interests and needs (CR: Delma Sweeney)
18 May	AM: Exploring conflict styles (CR: Delma Sweeney, Chris McDonagh) PM: Reframing and option development (CR: Delma Sweeney)
25 May	AM: Equality legislation (IC: Catherine Joyce Thomas McCann) PM: Mediation practice (CR: Phyllida Clarke)
1 June	Traveller pride event
8 June	AM: Travellers and media PM: Groupwork
15 June	AM: Human rights, racism and Traveller experience (IC: Martin Collins) PM: Practice (CR: Delma Sweeney)
22 June	AM: Assignments; Structural and cultural violence (CR: Delma Sweeney) PM: Practice, groupwork and exercises; focus group
29 June Glencree	AM: Student presentations on pride, culture and conflict PM: Story-telling (Jack Delaney)

Autumn term

Date	Theme
7 September	AM: Option development (CR: Delma Sweeney) PM: Introduction (IC: Thomas McCann)
14 September	AM: Negotiation (CR: Delma Sweeney) PM: Racism (IC: Catherine Joyce, speaker)
21st September	AM: Reaching agreement (CR: Delma Sweeney) PM: Community development (IC: Thomas McCann)
28th September	AM: Conflict coaching (CR: Aileen O'Brien, Chris McDonagh) PM: Preparation for research (IC: Thomas McCann)
5th October	AM: Conflict coaching (CR: Aileen O'Brien, Chris McDonagh) PM: Preparation for research (IC: Thomas McCann)
12th October	Glencree visit: relationships with Gardai
19th October	AM: Revenge and forgiveness (CR: Delma Sweeney) PM: Developing reflective practice (IC, CR: Thomas McCann)
26th October	Community restorative practices (CR: Aileen O'Brien, Delma Sweeney, Chris McDonagh)
9th November	AM: Trauma & PTSD:* (CR: Speaker: Patty Abozaglo) PM: Culture & conflict in Somalia (IC & CR: Speaker: Ali Hassan)
16th November	AM: Conflict and culture (Delma Sweeney) PM: Speaker: Pdraig MacLochlainn (IC)
23rd November	AM: Second track processes (IC&CR: Speaker: Sinead Ni Shuinear) PM: Research project (IC: Thomas McCann)
30th November	AM: Skills demonstration assignment (CR: Delma Sweeney) PM: Research project (IC: Thomas McCann)
7th December	AM: Skills demonstration and assignment (CR: Delma Sweeney) PM: Final session



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Health Service Executive

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