Foreword

Chairpersons Report –

I wish to welcome everyone here to the Cathedral Road Recreational Centre Armagh, to celebrate the achievements of Armagh Traveller Support Group (ATSG) over the past year.

I would like to thank my fellow Committee members both old and new, for their commitment and dedication. This sharing of resources, knowledge and skills has been an invaluable support to the group. I would like to thank ATSG staff for the calibre of work produced and for their professional and genuine approach. I have been aware of extreme pressures that Staff has been under to secure funding, meeting the rising need for the Family Support Service and keeping vital programmes such as the ATSG Women’s Group and Youth Group going. I would especially like to thank ATSG funders whose confidence in the organisation enables the work to be carried out.

Most importantly, I wish to thank the wider Traveller Community for all your support and friendship.

The following pages outline the extensive work programme that has been undertaken in the past year. I would encourage you all to read it.

Chairperson
Armagh Traveller Support Group Committee Members

2017/18

(To be announced)

Committee Members seeking elected at AGM on 12th of September 2018:

Committee Members not seeking re-election:

New members elected:

Members of Committee in an Advisory Role:
Armagh Traveller Support Group

Programmes and Projects provided by ATSG include:

Adult Education
Advocacy
Campaigning
Community Safety Events
Cook-It Programme
Cultural Awareness Training Women’s Group
Driving Test Theory Classes
Family Support Outreach Service
Family Support Service
Health Promotion Events
Lobbying
Media
Men’s Group (16+ years)
Mentoring
Networking
Research
Young Women’s Group (13+ years)
Youth Group (under 12 years)
SHSCT Traveller Action Group

ATSG and local Traveller involvement and consultation with the SHSCT Traveller Action Group has influenced the way the SHSCT plans and delivers services to the Travellers community. Links have been made between several SHSCT departments and ATSG and one of the many benefits of this partnership has been the uptake of mental health services, dermatology services, cancer specialist services, increased engagement and better outcomes in midwifery, health visitor and social services care. Trust staff are more aware of Traveller culture and a system is in place whereby any opportunity for involvement, professional liaison, collaborative working and support is well established and implemented thus creating improved access and uptake of vital health services.

ATSG Health Programmes

Women’s Group

Traveller women focused on learning relaxation techniques; breathing, art therapy, laughter therapy, and meditation recognising easy signs of anxiety and stress; the importance of taking the time to care for ones-self; exercise particularly in the outdoors; eating healthy; the impact of alcohol and healthy sleep patterns.

The participants were given details of mental health helplines, reassured that it is important to seek help from their GP. The Traveller women were also given information on the signs of depression so that they could spot them in their loved ones should that arise.

Primary information was given to Traveller women about the importance of HPV vaccinations for their female children and grandchildren and dispersed myths that their children would be safe from this type of cancer because they only have sexual relationships with one man. This information raised awareness of cervical cancer prevention.
Primary information was given to Traveller women regarding skin care, mole detection and referral pathways upon detection. There were open conversations about the hazards of sun beds and tanning injections. The women reported that while having a tan made them feel good they would consider cutting back and using other products such as fake tan and a high sun factor.

Traveller women received health checks BMI Blood Pressure checks, breast awareness information, contributed to 10 voices consultation on patient care and experiences in hospital, safety in the home awareness, gas safety, contributed to Type 2 diabetes booklet, contributed to Information for Carers and Pregnancy booklet and Type 2 diabetes booklet.

An improvement of recognising signs and changes in the body was achieved. Increased knowledge in safety measures in the home was achieved. There was significant contribution to consulting and giving their views on all public services that directly impact on their lives, this means our Traveller community are more informed on what is available to them in their locality and have information on the correct pathway to benefiting from it thus improving confident and competent and independence.

**Young Women’s Group**

Traveller Young women gained new information and new coping mechanisms relating to improving self-esteem, self-worth and emotional well-being. The young women were given information on pathways back to education and employment. The young women were introduced to the benefits of volunteering and different routes to volunteering.

**ATSG Education Project**

**Early Years & Pre School**

ATSG staff work in partnership with early years Toy box worker and family support staff from Sure Start project. We have three Traveller children attending the two year old programme which started in September 201. We have 10 families with children of pre-school age,
Primary & Secondary School
ATSG staff work in partnership with all local schools which Traveller children attend and with the Education Authority. This includes providing collaborative support for transition from pre-school to primary and primary to secondary school and support throughout the school environment.

Community Development

By adopting a community development approach, and identifying programmes and opportunities for intercultural work ATSG aims to challenge racism and sectarianism not only in relation to the Traveller community as an ethnic minority group, but within the Traveller community also.

The programmes we offer will focus on addressing long standing inequalities and promote an outcome based approach that will ensure that Travellers will be living in a society that promotes equality, access to services and respect for culture.

Youth Group

Good Friend Good Neighbour Project

A total of 15 children from all ethnic backgrounds living in the Callanbridge Ward of Armagh took part in a series of workshops dealing with topics such as bullying, friendship, anti-social behaviour, loneliness, respect for our elderly and what it means to be a good neighbour. This project was delivered with the support of ABC Council Good Relations and was a very good introductory project to for other work.

Connecting Through Culture Project

The I am Traveller Project brought together 14 young people from a diverse background living in the Callanbridge Ward of Armagh, this a well-known area of deprivation and a hot point during the Troubles.

Originally this I am Traveller Project was to explore Traveller culture as a single identity but we were able to go way beyond this goal.
To set the context, ATSG had previously carried Good Relations interventions work in partnership with PSNI, TIDES and ABC Council as there was historically concerns around conflict and tension in the area. At best mediation and conflict resolution was the only work that could be offered and this work had to be done with the three separate groups. We have over the years reached a point where community relations are stable.

This Programme was able to break down barriers, we renamed the project ‘Connecting Through Culture’ and recruited young people from all diverse backgrounds living in the area. This is the first programme of its kind in this area to be successfully delivered and we endeavour to build on its success so these young people will have a future in a cohesive united community.

As a result of the programme there has been an increase in the number of participants who are more favourable towards those from a different cultural background - of the 14 participants, 84% now felt more favourable towards people from a different cultural background.

As a result of the programme there has been an increase in the number of participants who feel they have a sense of belonging in the area they live in. 72% of the 14 participants felt more comfortable, more confident and at ease as a result of the programme.

As a result of the programme there has been an increase in the number of participants who have a deeper understanding of how asylum seekers must feel coming to Northern Ireland. 87% of the 14 participants felt more sympathetic towards asylum seekers.

**Women’s Group**

A 3 week Citizenship Programme were delivered to our Women’s Group, this was very timely in that it coincided with research published from both the Equality Commission and the Human Rights Commission investigating inequalities faced by the Traveller community. This intervention was aimed at increasing independent, empowerment and self-direction.

**Family Support Service**

The Family Support Service offered by ATSG is at the heart of everything we do and it is always paramount for ATSG to offer a professional and caring service to our families.
ATSG objectives for the Family Support Service are:

- Continuation of the Family Support Service, to be able to offer a professional face to face service to Irish Travellers living in or visiting Armagh City
- Continue and increase access to our Outreach Family Support Service in Keady and its surrounding parameters
- To continue to assist and empower Irish Travellers to have equal access to health, education, social welfare and accommodation services.
- To advocate on behalf of Traveller families and to support Traveller families to have their voices heard.

ATSG Family Support Service and Family Support Outreach remains at full capacity. Universal Credits has come in to affect in February 2018 in this area. As our client base has very poor literacy skills we are required to advocate and chaperone them to Social Security on a very consistent basis, it’s a steep learning curve for staff as well as for the client however good working relationships have been established between ATSG and Armagh Social Security which is very beneficial for all.

Volunteering

ATSG actively support a small team of volunteers from the Traveller community living in Armagh, we see this as a way forward for this community to be truly represented in society and to confidently participate in public, economic, social and cultural life.

The concept of volunteering is very new to the Traveller community living in Armagh. ATSG and our Traveller volunteers have been supported in the past year by SHSCT Traveller Health Co-ordinator Geraldine Donnelly and Eamon Murphy Volunteer NI who wish to acknowledge and thank. As a team £800 was raised for Marie Curie Daffodil appeal. During the BIG WALK for Volunteer Week, Marie Curie Staff met with our Traveller volunteers and thanked them personally for their efforts and presented them with a certificate of recognition. This provided a really nice starter in to volunteering, as it was meaningful to the families and raised many conversations around how families deal with a cancer diagnosis, palliative care and grieving.
Our Youth Group spent 4 weeks leading up to Christmas holidays making Christmas decorations for elderly neighbours, potted plants for each other's families and Christmas crafts as presents for friends in the estate. All 14 children from mixed ethnicity Traveller Non Traveller and Newcomers thoroughly enjoyed the experience and this programme went a long way in increasing good relations in the estates providing further opportunity for more work.

**Cultural Awareness Training**

Cultural Awareness Training has been in huge demand this year, ATSG have had the opportunity to deliver this bespoke training locally to ABC Council, SHSCT wide health care teams, Southern Board Area schools and regionally to the voluntary sector, governmental bodies and the statutory sector.

The outcomes of delivering CAT is that ATSG are proactively helping public services and the general public to understand the unique culture, heritage and culture of this indigenous community and we envisage the most significant outcome will be understanding, tolerance and acceptance.

**Lobbying and Campaigning**

ATSG have long advocated and campaigned for the rights of the Irish Travellers by highlighting to the wider community the problems arising from the lack of recognition and acceptance of Travellers as an ethnic group and the consequences of this in terms of experiencing racism and discrimination at an individual and institutional level. Travellers experience high levels of discrimination in all walks of life. This can be direct or indirect discrimination it can include lack of access to services, intimidation, bullying, name calling, stereotypical labelling and exclusion this happens in all aspects of society. This discourages the Traveller community from getting involved with all of the above mentioned.

In this year Travellers living in the Armagh area and ATSG had the opportunity to contribute to The Northern Ireland Human Rights Commissions investigation into Travellers' accommodation. This is the first major report on the subject in Northern Ireland for almost a
decade. ATSG also had the opportunity to speak to several media outlets, television, radio and social media on the matter.

Funders

Armagh Traveller Support Group would like to take this opportunity to thank our funders without their continued support we would not be able to deliver our much needed services.

- Children Services Planning
- Executive Office
- Halifax
- Public Health Agency
- Southern Health and Social Care Trust
- Tudor Trust

And finally, to the Traveller Community of Armagh City and District Council area, your support throughout the year has been greatly appreciated.