

HSE, Youth Work Ireland Tipperary and Tipperary County Council

Report of the Tipperary Roma Health and Accommodation Pilot Project.

April 2024



Comhairle Contae Thiobraid Árann
Tipperary County Council



Youth Work Ireland
Tipperary

Foreword

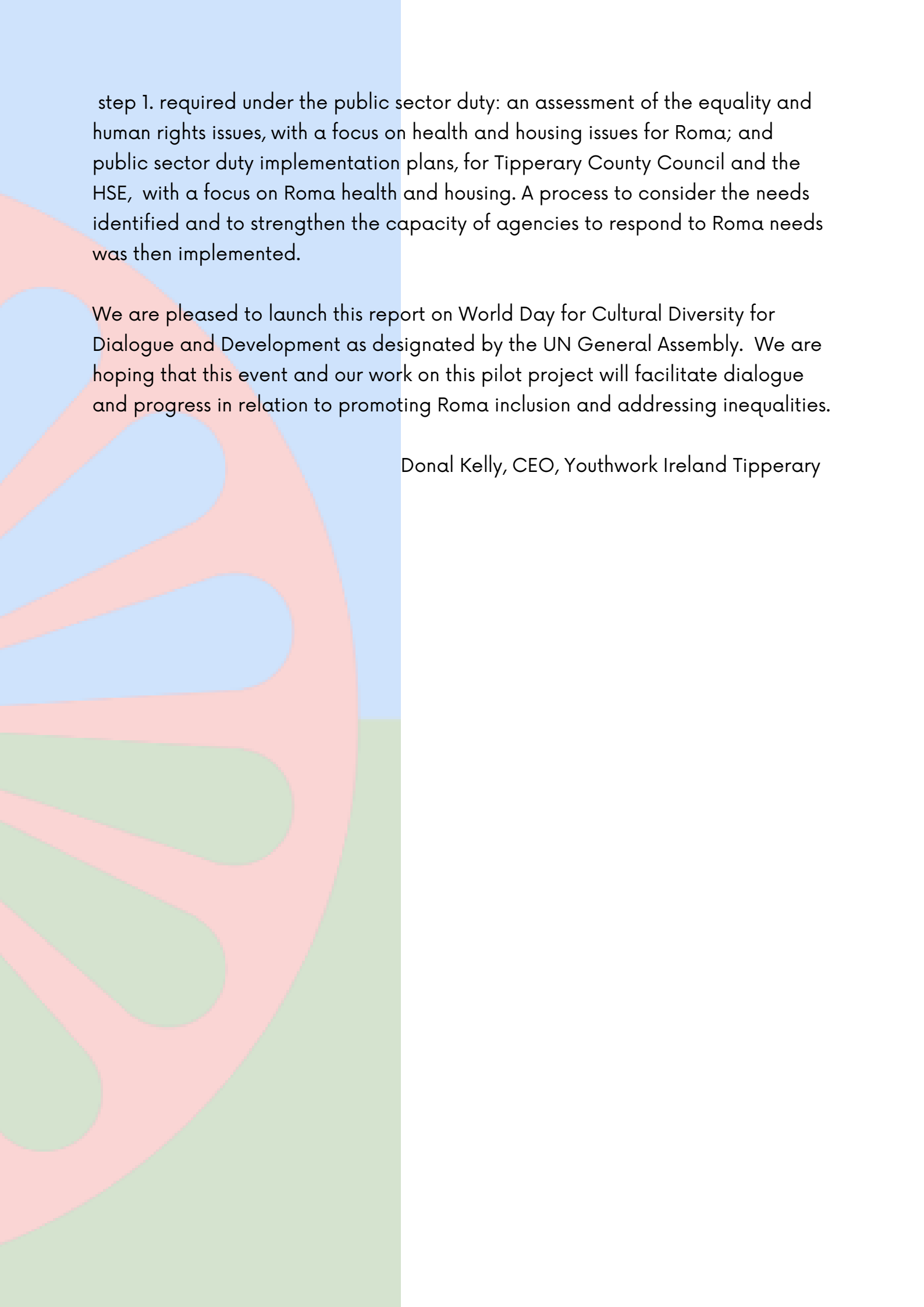
As the Chief Executive of Youth Work Ireland Tipperary it is my great pleasure to write the foreword to the Report of the Tipperary Roma Health and Accommodation Pilot Project.

Since the establishment of the Tipperary Roma Health Project, in 2021, we have been aware that access to accommodation is the single biggest issue for Roma in Tipperary. We were, therefore, delighted to partner with HSE Social Inclusion Mid-West and HSE Social Inclusion South East, and Tipperary County Council, to undertake this pilot project which focused on Roma in insecure or unsuitable housing. Beginning to work on the theme of Roma accommodation when there are acute issues with housing nationwide coupled with the challenges for local authorities in responding to the accommodation needs of the Ukrainian community and re-settled refugees, presented difficulties. However, I wish to pay tribute to our colleagues in Tipperary County Council for their enduring commitment to this project and to improving housing outcomes for Roma.

This was a demonstration pilot project, funded by the HSE National Social Inclusion Office, which aimed to contribute to the broader goal of the Tipperary Roma Health Project, to improve health outcomes for Roma In County Tipperary. We hope that this report and the accompanying report from the pilot project: 'A Needs Assessment of the Situation of Roma Living in county Tipperary: Analysis of findings', will contribute to the knowledge and evidence base in regard to the situation and experience of Roma in Ireland, and that they will inspire interagency structures working to address the needs of Roma throughout the country.

Through this pilot project a needs assessment was undertaken to examine the housing situation of Roma families who were engaged with our Roma Health Project. Additional targeted supports, to Roma in insecure or unsafe housing to improve their access to health services and health information, were also provided.

In addition to undertaking a needs assessment, the pilot project actions also included a focus on the public sector equality and human rights duty and its use as a lever to address Roma health and accommodation needs. This work was undertaken by Tipperary County Council and the HSE, in parallel processes involving separate working groups. Outputs from this work included:undertaking



step 1. required under the public sector duty: an assessment of the equality and human rights issues, with a focus on health and housing issues for Roma; and public sector duty implementation plans, for Tipperary County Council and the HSE, with a focus on Roma health and housing. A process to consider the needs identified and to strengthen the capacity of agencies to respond to Roma needs was then implemented.

We are pleased to launch this report on World Day for Cultural Diversity for Dialogue and Development as designated by the UN General Assembly. We are hoping that this event and our work on this pilot project will facilitate dialogue and progress in relation to promoting Roma inclusion and addressing inequalities.

Donal Kelly, CEO, Youthwork Ireland Tipperary

Acknowledgements

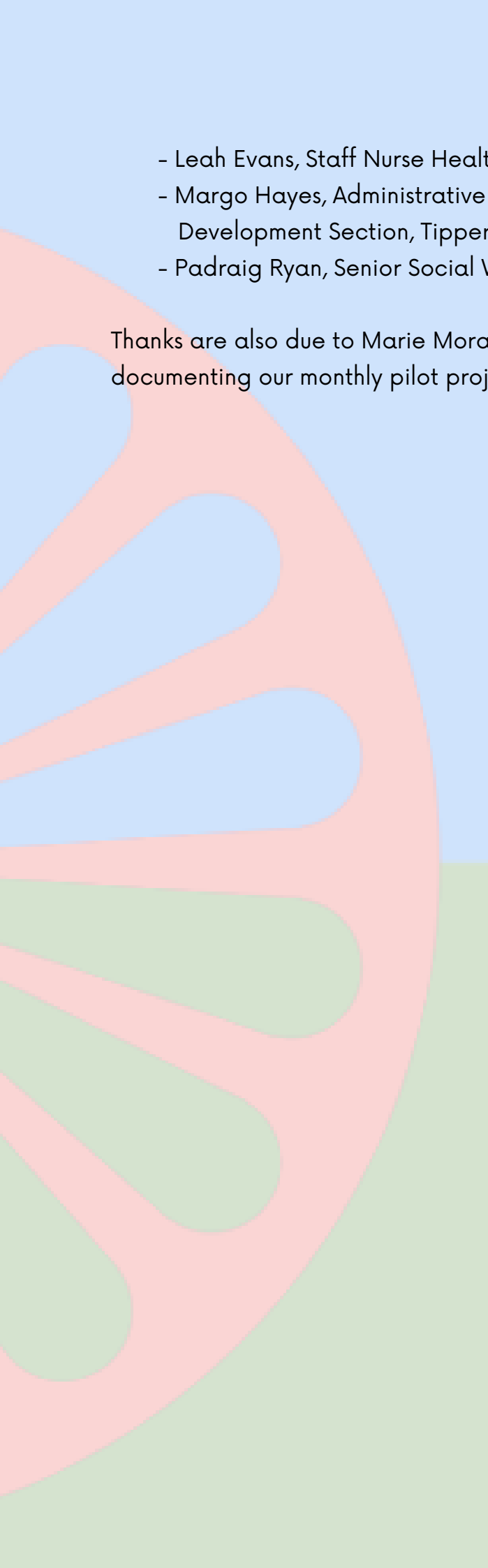
We wish to thank our partners for making this pilot project possible: HSE Social Inclusion South East and HSE Social Inclusion Mid-West and Tipperary County Council.

We would also like to acknowledge the work of the Roma Health and Accommodation Project Coordinator who conducted the needs assessment, and the work of Roma Health Worker and other Youth Work Ireland Tipperary project staff who supported the engagement of Roma in the needs assessment process. The needs assessment was made possible by the participation of the local Roma community and we thank them for taking the time to share their experiences with the project.

We would like to thank Rachel Mullen and Niall Crowley of Values Lab for assisting in the development of an equality and human rights-based focus to the needs assessment and to Rachel Mullen for her work in producing this report. Thanks also to Crosscare who provided advanced advocacy support through training, capacity-building, information and advice, which was very valuable in ensuring the success of the pilot project as well as positive outcomes for Roma families.

A number of individuals and organisations have contributed their time, knowledge and expertise to the development and delivery of the Pilot Project. We would like to acknowledge the following organisations and individuals:

- Youth Work Ireland Tipperary, for hosting and managing the Project.
- HSE Social Inclusion South East and HSE Social Inclusion Mid-West for supporting the Project.
- The HSE National Social Inclusion Office for funding this project.
- The members of the Lead Group for their support and guidance in implementing the Project:
 - Donal Kelly, CEO, Youth Work Ireland Tipperary (Chair).
 - Suzanne Nolan, Regional Roma Health Lead, HSE Social Inclusion South East Community Healthcare.
 - Josephine Fogarty, former Coordinator of Traveller & Roma Health, HSE Mid-West Community Healthcare.
 - Therese Donnellan, Senior Executive Officer, Office of General Manager Primary Care and Social Inclusion, Mid-West.
 - Dr Anne Dee, Consultant in Public Health Medicine, Public Health HSE Mid-West.

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- Leah Evans, Staff Nurse Health Protection Public Health, HSE Mid-West.
 - Margo Hayes, Administrative Officer, Economic, Community & Rural Development Section, Tipperary County Council.
 - Pdraig Ryan, Senior Social Worker, Tipperary County Council.

Thanks are also due to Marie Moran from HSE Social Inclusion South East for documenting our monthly pilot project meetings.

Table of Contents

Page

1.	Background and rationale for the Tipperary Roma Accommodation and Health Pilot Project	1
2.	Roma Health and Accommodation Pilot Project infrastructure and approach	4
3.	Pilot Project Actions, Outputs, and Outcomes	
3.1	Pilot Project aim and strands of action	8
3.2	Pilot Project outputs and outcomes	10
4.	Conclusions	19

1. Background and rationale for the Tipperary Roma Health and Accommodation Pilot Project ¹

The Tipperary Roma Health and Accommodation Pilot Project is a sub-project of the Tipperary Roma Health Project.

The Tipperary Roma Health Project was established in May 2021, initially as a pilot, to respond to the specific health and welfare needs of the Roma community in County Tipperary in the wake of the threat posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. This project was independently evaluated, in May 2022, with evaluation findings noting that: the Project's "infrastructure supports and enables project efficiency"; "significant effectiveness is demonstrated with project outputs delivered to a high level, not solely in regard to provision of health information and referral, but also in regard to wider social determinants of health status."; and "the project has delivered a number of key outcomes during the pilot phase".[1]

The Tipperary Roma Health Project produced a "Guide to Establishing a Roma Health Project" which has been widely disseminated, including to other HSE Community Healthcare Organisation (CHO) areas to support their work in addressing the health needs of the Roma community.

A key objective of the Tipperary Roma Health Project involved mapping the Roma population in County Tipperary to identify the situation and experience of Roma in regard to their health and wellbeing, using a social determinants of health framework. When the Tipperary Roma Health Project was established, local health services estimated that there could be up to 50 Roma living in County Tipperary. However, through extensive proactive outreach work and building trust with the Roma community, by mid-2022, the Tipperary Roma Health Project had identified 168 Roma living in the County (111 in South Tipperary and 57 in North Tipperary), of which, 78 were, by that time, actively engaged with the project. By February 2024, 315 Roma had been identified as living in County Tipperary, with 193 people engaged with the project. A diverse Roma community was identified, including Roma from Romania, Slovakia, Czech Republic, Bulgaria, Hungary, Ukraine, Sweden, Turkey, and Irish-born Roma.

The Tipperary Roma Health Project outreach work identified a situation of significant disadvantage for Roma across the range of social determinants, with access to adequate accommodation and security of tenure in that accommodation, identified as the most urgent need for the majority of Roma in the county.

[1] Mullen, R. (May 2022). "Tipperary Roma Health Project: Evaluation Report". Values Lab.

The mapping process identified that, as of mid-2022:

- 75% of the Roma population in the county were homeless and/or in insecure housing and, therefore, at imminent risk of becoming homeless,
- 25% of the Roma population in the county had been homeless at some point, while living in Ireland,
- 22% of the Roma population in North-Tipperary were facing imminent homelessness, and
- 50% of the Roma population in the county were living in private rented accommodation characterised by insecurity of tenure and without tenancy documents, which landlords are legally required to provide, and many families living in multi-family units and experiencing overcrowding, and accommodation being of poor quality.

The health and wellbeing impacts of one-off or recurring events of homelessness and/or the ongoing threat of imminent homelessness are significant. For a marginalised and vulnerable group like the Roma community, there are additional adverse factors that both increase the likelihood of their becoming homeless and prevent their access to housing and social housing supports:

- Language barriers and, for some, literacy barriers also, make it very difficult to access information and to navigate complex application processes for social protection and other state supports,
- Discrimination and racism, at the individual and institutional levels, present barriers to Roma accessing the supports and services they need, and
- Regulatory barriers, such as the application of the right to reside conditions [2], the Habitual Residence Condition (HRC)[3], and policy barriers, such as the Department of Housing Circular 41/2012 [4], are frequently cited as reasons why Roma are denied access to key social protection, social housing, and emergency homeless supports.

[2] European Free Movement Directive 2004/38/EC is transposed into Irish law under the European Communities (Free Movement of Persons) Regulations 2015 SI 548/2015. Under these Regulations, EU/EEA citizens coming to Ireland can reside in the State for up to 3 months, during which time, unless their situation evolves, they can be denied State supports, subject to compliance with other applicable Irish or EU law. After the first three months of residence, a person wishing to remain in the State must be: in employment/self-employed; have sufficient resources for self and family; be enrolled in education with sufficient means; or be a family member of someone who satisfies one of these conditions. Persons who do not satisfy one of these conditions must establish a right to reside if they wish to remain in the State and to apply for such as social assistance.

[3] The HRC is a provision of social welfare legislation relating to access to non-contributory and social assistance payment schemes, where EU law exemptions do not apply.

[4] Housing Circular 41/2012, was issued by the then Department of Housing, Environment and Local Government, to all local authorities, to provide advice on the provision of social housing supports to non-Irish nationals. The Circular includes a provision (paragraphs 5 and 6) that local authorities should only assess housing applications from non-Irish EU/EEA nationals where: they are in employment in the State; they are unable to work due to accident or injury, or; they are a jobseeker with a record of 52 weeks employment in the State. Rigid application of the Circular, as though it had the force of law, and that it is contrary to EU law, has been critiqued by such bodies as the Free Legal Advice Centres.

Based on the outcome of the initial mapping process, which identified significant issues in regard to the housing situation of local Roma, the Project Steering Group took the decision to apply for funding for a twelve-month pilot Roma health and accommodation initiative.

In June 2022, funding for a pilot project was secured, through the HSE National Social Inclusion Office funding initiative to improve the health outcomes of excluded and vulnerable groups living in insecure and/or unsuitable housing, in partnership with Tipperary County Council.

2. Roma Health and Accommodation Pilot Project infrastructure and approach

The Tipperary Health and Accommodation Pilot Project (the Pilot Project) infrastructure has three key operational pillars:

- Project lead group
- Project host organisation
- The Tipperary Roma Health Project Interagency Steering Group. In addition, a subgroup of the Steering Group was established to oversee the Roma Health and Accommodation Pilot Project.

Project lead group

HSE Social Inclusion Mid-West Community Healthcare and South-East Community Healthcare, and Youth Work Ireland Tipperary act as a tripartite partnership to lead the Tipperary Roma Health and Accommodation Pilot Project, as part of their lead role of the parent Tipperary Roma Health Project.

HSE Social Inclusion staff leads for the Pilot Project bring a high level of experience and expertise to the Pilot Project in regard to their work, in Mid-West Community Healthcare and South-East Community Healthcare, which involves leading actions to address the health needs of socially excluded and disadvantaged communities, including the Roma community.

Youth Work Ireland Tipperary have extensive experience in supporting and managing a range of projects dealing with health, social and housing issues including from an intercultural perspective, with a Traveller Youth Project, and a Syrian Resettlement Project.

Project host organisation

Youth Work Ireland Tipperary manage the day-to-day operation of the Pilot Project and are the employer for the Pilot Project employee and the Tipperary Roma Health Project employee.

Since the commencement of the Tipperary Roma Health Project, in May 2021, a Roma Health Worker has been employed, by Youth Work Ireland Tipperary, to deliver on that project's objectives. This role involves:

- identifying and mapping the needs of the local Roma population;
- supporting Roma to access services and supports; and
- advocating on behalf of Roma to improve their access to mainstream services and supports.

Following the successful application for funding for the Tipperary Roma Health and Accommodation Pilot Project, a second post, Roma Health and Accommodation Coordinator, was established for the period of the Pilot Project.

Project Steering Group

The third key pillar of the Pilot Project infrastructure is a multi-stakeholder steering group comprising local service providers and community organisations. This originated with the development of the parent Tipperary Roma Health Project, and has taken on a role in the delivery of the Tipperary Roma Accommodation and Health Pilot Project.

In addition to the three Pilot Project leads, the Steering Group is comprised as follows:

- HSE (Mid-West Community Healthcare and South-East Community Healthcare): three staff participating, with expertise in public health, public health nursing and health promotion.
- Tipperary County Council: three staff participating, with expertise in social work, community development, and the Healthy Ireland initiative.
- Four local development/ community-based organisations: four staff participating, with expertise in Roma inclusion, community development, and social inclusion.
- Coordinator of the Tipperary Public Participation Network, with expertise in social inclusion and community participation.
- Tipperary Education and Training Board: one staff participating, with expertise in adult education.
- Tusla: one staff participating with expertise in family support.

In addition, the Project Steering Group subgroup, established to oversee the Tipperary Roma Health and Accommodation Pilot Project, is comprised as follows:

- Youthwork Ireland Tipperary (CEO, and the Roma Health and Accommodation Coordinator),
- Tipperary County Council (Senior Social Worker, and the dedicated lead for Community and Enterprise),
- HSE (Project leads from Social Inclusion-Mid-West Community Healthcare and South-East Community Healthcare, a consultant in Public Health Medicine, and a Public Health Nurse from the HSE Mid-West region).

This subgroup met monthly throughout the period of the Pilot Project.

The terms of reference for the Tipperary Roma Health Project Steering Group establish its purpose as follows:

- To support Youth Work Ireland Tipperary to implement the Roma Health Project in accordance with the Project Strategic Plan 2022 to 2025.
- To work in partnership to support the strategic development of Roma health work and respond to Roma health needs in County Tipperary, informed by the National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy, the National Roma Needs Assessment, and the Second National Intercultural Health Strategy.
- To identify issues that need to be progressed at regional or national level.
- To share best practice in the area of Roma health.
- To maintain appropriate funding for the Tipperary Roma Health Project in the long term.

The Steering Group has met monthly since the establishment of the Tipperary Roma Health Project and is Chaired by the CEO of YWIT.

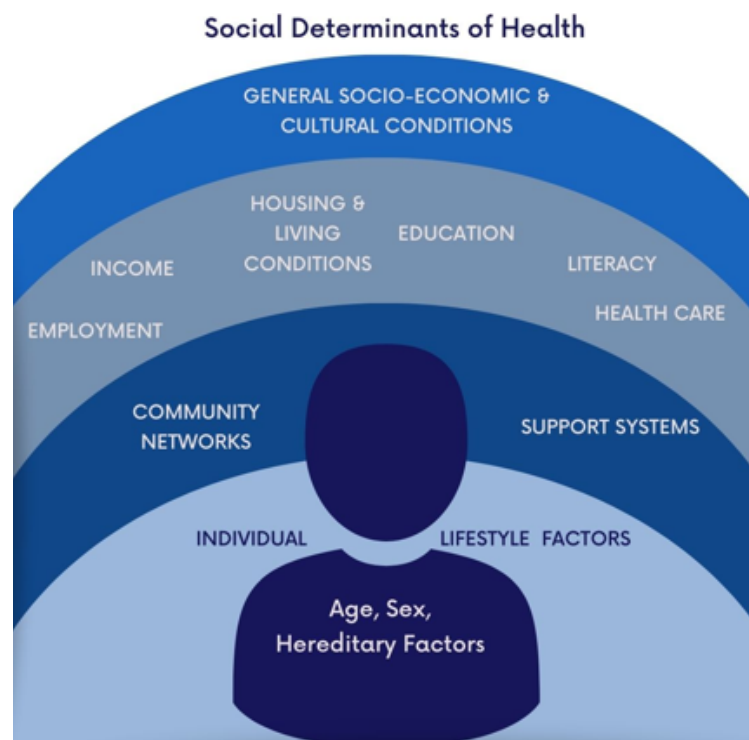
Tipperary Roma Health and Accommodation Project Approach

The Project takes a dual approach, involving:

- Targeted measures to:
 - identify and respond to the specific needs of Roma,
 - enhance health referral pathways, and
 - bring forward the voice of Roma as service users; and
- Mainstreaming activities that enable access to general health services, and, more broadly, those services with responsibility for those areas identified as adverse social determinants for Roma health.

The Tipperary Roma Health Project's approach, to addressing the health needs of Roma, is underpinned by a focus on the broader social determinants of health.

Employing a social determinants frame involves a holistic approach to improving the health status of individuals and groups through a focus on a range of interconnected personal, social, economic, and environmental factors in



shaping health and wellbeing outcomes for individuals and reducing health inequalities between different groups.

The Roma community, given their marginal and unequal status in society, experience a range of adverse social determinants that negatively affect their health and wellbeing including: insecure and substandard housing; high levels of unemployment; poverty and material deprivation; and high levels of discrimination and racism in accessing key services and from the wider public.[5] Supporting Roma to address these issues is a crucial imperative in addressing health inequalities for the community.

The Tipperary Roma Health Project approach seeks to adhere to the National Standards for Safer Better Healthcare, and to ensure alignment with the principles set out in the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence guidance on integrated health and social care services for people experiencing homelessness.[6]

[5] Pavee Point Traveller and Roma Centre and Department of Justice and Equality (2018) Roma in Ireland: A National Needs Assessment.

[6] UK National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE): Guidance on integrated health and social care services for people experiencing homelessness. March 2022.

3.1 Pilot Project aim and strands of action

The Tipperary Roma Health and Accommodation Pilot Project (referred to hereafter as the Pilot Project), was initially intended as a twelve-month pilot, but was extended for an additional six month period, running from September 2022 to March 2024.

The overarching goal of the work of the Roma Health Project is to improve the health outcomes of Roma in Tipperary. Insecure and/or unsuitable accommodation is identified as a barrier to health and wellbeing and the Pilot Project sought to focus on this area with a view to contributing to this overarching goal.

Three strands of action were identified for the Pilot Project:

1. Undertake a needs assessment and deliver advocacy supports to Roma, encompassing the following:

- Employ a Roma Health and Accommodation Coordinator to undertake the needs assessment and work directly with Roma.
- Engage with local Roma to undertake a housing, health and social care needs assessment of the Roma population in the County.
- Provide outreach advocacy supports to Roma individuals and families in insecure/ unsuitable housing to improve their access to health services and health information, including advocating on their behalf with service providers.
- Engage the Tipperary Roma Health Project Steering Group members to improve Roma referral pathways into and outcomes from mainstream services and supports.

2. Use the public sector equality and human rights duty as a lever to address Roma health and accommodation needs, encompassing the following:

- Establishing public sector duty working groups for this purpose, in HSE Mid-West Community Healthcare and South-East Community Healthcare, and in Tipperary County Council.
- Delivery of supports to HSE Mid-West Community Healthcare and South-East Community Healthcare, and in Tipperary County Council, to undertake step 1. of the Duty (an assessment of equality and human rights issues) and develop implementation plans for applying the Duty in relation to service delivery to Roma (health and accommodation respectively).

3. Document issues and disseminate learning, encompassing the following:

- Compile and analyse the data and information gathered through the needs assessment to inform the future work of the Roma Health and Accommodation Pilot Project.
- Disseminating the results of the needs assessment, through a final report and launch event, to inform local, regional and national learning on the situation and experience of Roma and the responses required.

In delivering on the above strands of action, the Lead Group, Tipperary Roma Health Project Steering Group, and its subgroup, continued to work collectively to support the delivery of Pilot Project outputs, through:

- collaborative work to develop integrated care pathways to support Roma who are homeless, at risk of becoming homeless or living in substandard accommodation;
- working to ensure that mainstream local services are making adaptations and developing cultural competence, to increase Roma access to and participation in these services; and
- identifying and applying good practice in County Tipperary and, as a demonstration project, sharing the learning with other HSE geographic areas and with Local Authorities.

In supporting the delivery of actions, external expertise was commissioned from Crosscare[7] and Values Lab[8]:

- Crosscare were contracted to support the advocacy work of the Pilot Project Coordinator and Roma Health Project staff, through training, capacity-building, and provision of information and advice on specific casework.
- Values Lab were contracted to undertake parallel processes with Tipperary County Council and HSE Mid-West Community Healthcare and South-East Community Healthcare, to support both organisations to use the public sector equality and human rights duty to support their work to address Roma health and accommodation needs, respectively. Values Lab also provided support to

[7] Crosscare is a non-governmental organisation operating services and supports in regard to: homelessness and homelessness prevention, youth, food poverty, addiction and counselling services as well as the national Crosscare Information and Advocacy Service (CIAS). CIAS operates in the areas of homelessness prevention, housing and welfare, Immigration, refugee matters and Irish citizen immigration, emigration and Irish Diaspora Support

[8] Values Lab is an independent consultancy providing services to public sector and NGO sector organisations working to address equality and human rights concerns. Taking a values-led approach, Values Lab has particular expertise in regard to implementation of the public sector equality and human rights duty, and supports a range of public bodies to implement the duty.

the Pilot Project to develop the framework of questions for the needs assessment interviews with Roma, to capture data and information on the situation and experience of Roma, thus ensuring an equality and rights-based focus.

3.2 Pilot Project outputs and outcomes

In delivering on the Pilot Project's objectives, under the three identified strands of action, the following outputs and outcomes are identified:

Strand 1. Undertake a needs assessment and deliver advocacy supports to Roma:

Completion of a housing, health and social care needs assessment:

The role of the Roma Health and Accommodation Coordinator involved undertaking a needs assessment with Roma in County Tipperary. The needs assessment aimed to have a particular focus on identifying the situation and experience of Roma in regard to:

- their access to suitable and secure accommodation;
- their access to social housing supports;
- the standard of accommodation Roma were residing in and whether family members had health conditions that could be caused or exacerbated by adverse living conditions;
- issues of homelessness and hidden homelessness;
- level of access to primary healthcare, vis-a-vis medical card status; and
- information on wider social determinants of health was also sought, namely: access to social protection supports; employment status of household members; experiences of discrimination in accessing employment, services and supports; and incidents of racism experienced in employment, accessing services, and from the wider public.

The development of the frame of questions for the needs assessment involved consultation with those already working with, and having a familiarity with, the Roma community in County Tipperary. In addition, advice and input was sought from Values Lab, to ensure an equality and rights-based focus to developing the data collection tool. The frame of questions was piloted with five members of the Roma community. This piloting allowed further refinement of the data collection tool.

Roma individuals and families who were engaged with the Roma Health Project, were invited to participate in the needs assessment process. Involvement in the process was explained as being entirely voluntary and informed consent was sought from those who agreed to participate. Within this, it was important to temper expectations of Roma, in being fully appraised that engaging in the needs assessment interview was not going to advance them towards securing

accommodation. In this regard, the boundary and limitations of the role of the Roma Health and Accommodation Coordinator needed to be fully explained to participating Roma.

The needs assessment was undertaken through face-to-face interviews. Translation during the interviews, where required, was aided by three staff members from the Roma Health Project, who spoke relevant languages. Interviews were conducted between April and mid-August 2023, primarily at the Youth Work Ireland Tipperary offices in Thurles and Cashel, with some interviews at the homes of individual participants at their invitation. To accommodate people's work schedules, some interviews were arranged in the evening and at weekends.

The needs assessment involved a total of 38 households. In total, 66 families were identified as living within the 38 households, of which, 49 separate families took part in the needs assessment.[9] Needs assessment interviews were conducted with one, or in some instances two adult members of the family. Fifty-seven interviews were conducted in total, with 32 Roma men and 25 Roma women. All of the Roma families in County Tipperary that were previously known to the Project took part in the needs assessment.

Provision of outreach advocacy supports to Roma individuals and families:

The Roma Health and Accommodation Coordinator worked alongside the Roma Health Worker to support individual Roma to access services and supports. During the Pilot Project, the following advocacy supports were delivered, based on the needs of individual families:

- **Housing/accommodation:** provision of information on rights and entitlements in regard to social housing supports, and assistance to make applications for these supports; supporting families to engage with the County Council housing section.

Seventeen families were supported to apply for social housing supports. Of these 17 families: seven families were accepted onto the social housing list; one family is awaiting a decision on their application; five families are awaiting translation of documents to assist their application; three families were assessed as not qualifying for social housing supports; and one family left Ireland.

[9] Tipperary Roma Health and Accommodation Project (April 2024). A needs assessment of the Situation of Roma Living in County Tipperary: Analysis of Findings.

Four families were supported to find suitable accommodation through the Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) scheme. Two of these families were on the verge of being evicted, however, the Project Coordinator successfully negotiated on their behalf, with the letting agent, to agree new rental contracts. The remaining two families also faced significant housing challenges: one family had been served with an eviction notice, and the other had a disabled family member whose sleeping arrangements in the accommodation were wholly inadequate due to the accommodation being wheelchair inaccessible. The Project Coordinator supported both families to find new accommodation.

- **Health:** provision of information on rights and entitlements in regard to accessing a medical card or GP visit card; assistance to apply for a medical card/GP visit card and to gather the relevant documentation for these applications; signposting and referral to healthcare services; and advocacy supports to assist Roma to access and engage with healthcare providers.
- **Social Protection:** provision of information and support in gathering documentation to apply for a PPS number; and social protection payments.
- **Education:** provision of information on pre-school provision and school enrollment.
- **Community supports:** linking Roma to community services and supports.

Crosscare were commissioned to provide advocacy training, advice, and support to build the capacity of the Pilot Project. The main focus of this capacity-building was to upskill Project staff by increasing their knowledge in regard to migrants rights and entitlements, particularly in the areas of housing, social housing supports and emergency homeless accommodation provision and related social protection; and support a non-adversarial approach to advocacy work that was collaborative in nature focusing on partnership working, with service providers, to finding solutions.

The capacity-building work with Crosscare involved:

- Delivery of three capacity-building training sessions to Project staff, focusing on the following: effective and positive interaction with statutory service providers; effective advocacy skills; working collaboratively to achieve outcomes; making high quality applications and submissions; and understanding rights and entitlements.
- Provision of advocacy support mentoring to the Health and Accommodation Coordinator in regard to seven complex cases involving tenancy sustainment and homelessness issues, and access to social housing supports.

- Delivery of training to Tipperary County Council on migrants rights and entitlements in regard to accessing homeless and social housing supports in Ireland.

The following were among the positive outcomes, for Roma individuals and families, delivered as a result of this advocacy work:

- A number of Roma families were successfully supported to access social housing supports, including four families whose applications had previously been turned down:
 - A Roma family was supported to secure a reversal of a decision by a local authority in another county, to refuse the family access to emergency homeless services.
 - A Roma woman parenting alone was supported to successfully appeal the decision of the local authority to refuse her application for social housing supports. As a consequence, she is now on the social housing list and has been approved for Housing Assistance Payment support.
 - A Roma family was supported to gather the required documentation to satisfy the requirements of the Habitual Residence Condition. In turn, they were supported to successfully apply for a social protection payment, and subsequently obtain medical cards. The interagency collaboration between the Roma Health and Accommodation Project staff and staff from the local authority, resulted in the family successfully applying for social housing supports, including being approved for Housing Assistance Payment.
 - Roma awareness was increased to understand accommodation and housing provision and how to make applications.
 - Through interagency collaboration, improved relationships between Roma and the local authority staff were secured.

Engaging the Project Steering Group members to improve Roma referral pathways into and outcomes from mainstream services and supports:

In line with the Roma Health Project's dual approach of mainstreaming and targeting, it is seen as important to ensure that mainstream public and non-governmental services and supports, improve their response to Roma, in particular in addressing adverse social determinants of health. The collaborative engagement of the Roma Health Project Steering Group and subgroup, comprising key service stakeholders, played a valuable role in addressing barriers to Roma access to mainstream services and supports.

During the period of the Pilot Project there was a particular emphasis on Roma access to adequate accommodation and tenancy sustainment, and access to social housing supports. In this, the monthly meetings of the Pilot Project subgroup of the Roma Health Project Steering Group, including representation from the

local authority, were a useful vehicle for relevant service providers to engage with the Roma Health and Accommodation Coordinator in regard to specific barriers Roma were encountering and, where possible, working collaboratively to address those barriers. This collaborative engagement included the following:

- The Roma Health and Accommodation Coordinator received advice and information in regard to specific technical, regulatory and policy requirements relating to eligibility for social housing supports and emergency homeless supports. These discussions also allowed for misinformation to be addressed in regard to issues of eligibility for social housing and homeless accommodation supports.
- The input of the local authority representatives was vital in providing advice to the Roma Health and Accommodation Coordinator regarding specific complex cases.
- The local authority and the Roma Health and Accommodation Coordinator liaised to support Roma families with language translation when they were accessing services in Tipperary County Council.

Enabling factors in delivering on Strand 1. actions:

The following enabling factors are identified that supported the Pilot Project's delivery of Strand 1. actions:

- To ensure a good outcome from the needs assessment process the Roma Health and Accommodation Coordinator needed to establish trust with the Roma families. Relationships had already been built and trust established, with a significant number of families, through their engagement with the Roma Health Worker. The Roma Health Worker, therefore, played an instrumental role in facilitating the Roma Health and Accommodation Coordinator's positive introduction to Roma families.
- The development of the frame of questions for the needs assessment benefited from consultation with those already working with, and having a familiarity with the Roma community in County Tipperary. In addition, external support from Values Lab also assisted in the development of the needs assessment frame of questions to ensure an equality and rights-based focus to developing the data collection tool.
- Crosscare's expert contribution to the Pilot Project in building staff knowledge and capacity to provide advocacy supports. This included the delivery of advanced advocacy training and one-to-one support to the Roma Health and Accommodation Coordinator in regard to specific cases involving complex legal, regulatory and policy barriers.
- The partnership approach between the Pilot Project staff and the local authority representatives on the Pilot Project subgroup, and their colleagues in Tipperary County Council, was pivotal in addressing a number of complex cases involving Roma families access to social housing supports.

Strand 2. Use the public sector equality and human rights duty as a lever to address Roma health and accommodation needs:

Establishing public sector duty working groups: HSE Mid-West Community Healthcare, South-East Community Healthcare, and Tipperary County Council:

In Tipperary County Council, a cross-department public sector duty working group was established, comprising the Pilot Project subgroup representatives from the local authority and other staff from the organisation, from: the housing section, the homeless section, community liaison, community and enterprise, customer service, and human resources.

A HSE public sector duty working group was established comprising Pilot Project subgroup representatives from the HSE, and other HSE staff, from Mid-West Community Healthcare and South-East Community Healthcare, in: Social Inclusion (Primary Care), Public Health, and Health and Wellbeing. Two staff from the HSE National Office for Human Rights and Equality Policy also participated in the working group.

Delivery of supports to HSE Mid-West Community Healthcare and South-East Community Healthcare, and Tipperary County Council, to undertake step 1. of the Duty (an assessment of equality and human rights issues), and develop implementation plans for applying the Duty in relation to service delivery to Roma (health and accommodation respectively):

Values Lab facilitated parallel processes with the Tipperary County Council public sector duty working group, and the HSE public sector duty working group to put in place a number of foundational elements, for each organisation, to implement the Duty with a particular focus on Roma health and accommodation needs.

The following outputs were delivered:

- An online familiarisation session on the Duty for the Pilot Project subgroup.
- Four online sessions with each working group, which encompassed: understanding the legal requirements of the Duty across the three required steps: Assess, Address, Report; exploring the concepts of equality and human rights; addressing organisational ambition to address health and housing inequalities for Roma; and establishing how best to implement the Duty in this regard;
- For each organisation:
 - an equality and human rights values statement was developed to frame each organisation's work on the Duty;
 - an assessment of equality and human rights issues for Roma was developed (step 1. of the Duty), with particular focus on: housing and homelessness and service provision (for the Local Authority assessment); and the broad social

- determinants of health (for the HSE assessment); and
- a Duty Implementation Plan was developed.

This process was completed in February 2024. The Duty Implementation Plans and the actions contained in these, are now being considered by each organisation.

Enabling factors in delivering on Strand 2. actions:

The following enabling factors are identified that supported the Pilot Project's delivery of Strand 2. actions:

- The commitment of senior staff in Tipperary County Council and the HSE to enable staff engagement in the process and the ongoing commitment to action to address Roma health/accommodation needs.
- The HSE National Office for Equality and Human Rights Policy had previously developed a draft of an equality and human rights values statement, to frame their work on the Duty. This draft was used as a basis for developing the values statement for the HSE Duty Working Group.
- HSE South East, Social Inclusion had previously undertaken a process to implement the Duty, including the development of an equality and human rights values statement.
- Tipperary County Council had previously developed a strategy for implementing the Duty across the organisation which provided a valuable starting point for this process. The output from this process, via the Pilot Project, is, in turn, enabled by this wider organisational process on the Duty.

Strand 3. Document issues and disseminate learning:

Compile and analyse the data and information gathered through the needs assessment and disseminate findings to inform local, regional and national learning on the situation and experience of Roma:

The Roma Health and Accommodation Coordinator completed a comprehensive needs assessment involving a total of 49 separate families living in 38 households. All of the Roma families in County Tipperary that were previously known to the Project took part in the needs assessment.

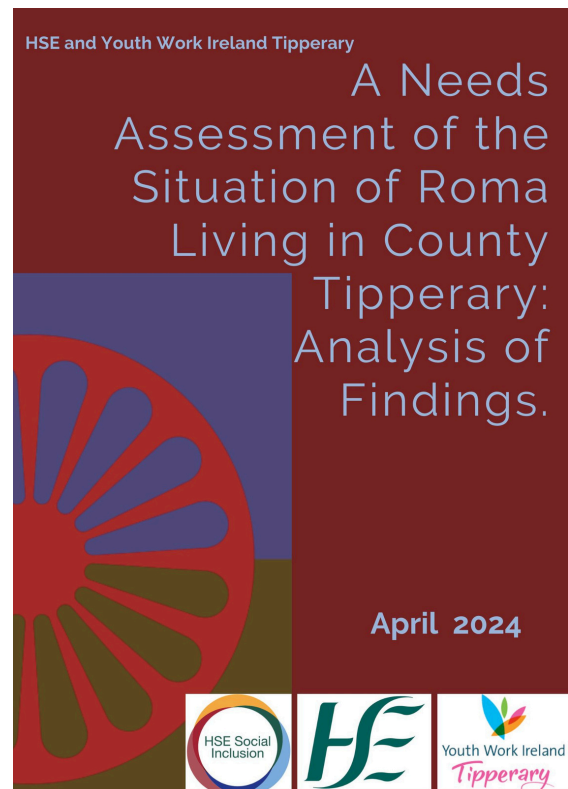
Values Lab was commissioned to analyse the data and information from the needs assessment and to produce the report setting out the findings and analysis. Analysis of the situation and experience of the Roma families who participated in the needs assessment indicates significant disadvantage in the housing situation and living conditions for many Roma in County Tipperary.

Homelessness, including hidden-homelessness was a significant issue for Roma families, and a confluence of adverse issues was in play, that likely placed Roma families at increased risk of becoming homeless, namely:

- Roma lacking awareness of their rights and entitlements, including as tenants in the private rental market,
- lack of access to social housing and social protection supports,
- lack of access and capacity in information, advocacy and state services to support the needs of Roma households,
- high levels of discrimination in seeking accommodation (in particular landlords refusing to accept the housing assistance payment), and abuse of tenancy rights, and
- substandard living conditions: high levels of overcrowding; accommodation with extensive damp and mould; and families unable to afford to heat accommodation during the winter.

The needs assessment also identified that Roma experienced adverse social determinants in a number of other areas, namely:

- low levels of access to social protection supports and benefits,
- unemployment, with language barriers presenting as a key barrier to employment,
- high levels of discrimination, in particular when seeking employment, and
- high levels of racism at the individual level, in particular from employers and landlords.



These findings align with the findings from the National Roma Needs Assessment, conducted in 2018.[10]

The outcome of the Pilot Project needs assessment identify a number of possible action areas for the next phase of the work of the Tipperary Roma Health Project.

The report of the findings from the needs assessment will be launched on May 21, 2024, at an event in County Tipperary. Attendees will include: relevant public sector stakeholders involved in policymaking and service development and delivery; non-governmental stakeholders involved in delivery of advocacy and community supports; and Roma who participated in the needs assessment.

[10] Pavee Point Traveller and Roma Centre and Department of Justice (2018). Op cit.

The report will also be widely disseminated to local, regional and national-level stakeholders.

The launch event will:

- raise awareness of the situation and experience of Roma in accessing services and supports, with a particular focus on health and accommodation,
- raise awareness of the Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty as a lever to address equality and human rights issues for Roma, and
- share good practice, outcomes and learning from the Pilot Project.

An event planned by the Roma Health Worker took place to mark international Roma Day, on April 8, 2024, with eighty-seven members of the Roma community in attendance. This event included a focus on informing Roma about the findings of the needs assessment. The Project staff worked with Roma to support their attendance and participation at the launch event.

The Roma Health Project Worker is leading the development of a video about the Roma community in County Tipperary: their situation, experience and needs. This video will be an important vehicle for the Roma voice to emerge and aims to be informative and educational in nature.

Enabling factors in delivering on Strand 3. actions:

The following enabling factors are identified that supported the Pilot Project's delivery of Strand 3. actions:

- The collaboration of the Project Steering Group members in the planning of the launch event.
- The collaboration between Mid-West Community Healthcare and South-East Community Healthcare, in planning the event and in the dissemination of the needs assessment findings.
- The work undertaken by Values Lab to collate and analyse the data and information from the needs assessment and in collaborating with the Project Lead Group to producing the needs assessment final report.
- The support of local authority representatives in securing the Cathaoirleach of Tipperary County Council to launch the needs assessment findings.
- The National HSE Human Rights and Equality Policy Office have invited the Project to submit an article on the Pilot Project for the Spring edition of their newsletter.

The work of the Tipperary Roma Health Project, in operation since mid-2021, and the Roma Health and Accommodation Pilot Project, which operated for an eighteen-month period, has identified and effectively engaged with a significant number of Roma families residing in County Tipperary.

The needs analysis undertaken by the Roma Health and Accommodation Pilot Project identifies key barriers for Roma in accessing basic supports and services and adequate secure accommodation. The outcome of this needs assessment provides a much-needed evidence base in regard to the situation and experience of Roma in the County. This evidence base presents a useful roadmap to inform the next phase of work for the Roma Health Project.

The public sector equality and human rights duty was identified as a key lever for the work of the Pilot Project. The parallel processes undertaken by the HSE and Tipperary County Council and the resultant Duty Implementation Plans developed by each organisation, will usefully serve to drive outcomes for Roma through the wider plans, policies and programmes of each organisation, and in the delivery of actions identified for the next phase of the work of the Roma Health Project.

The expertise and collective approach of the Project Steering Group, and its subgroup, have been integral to the delivery of Project outputs and the outcomes achieved. This collaborative approach was particularly evident in the joint work of Project staff and Project Steering Group members from Tipperary County Council, in enhancing referral pathways to mainstream social housing supports. The continued support of the multi-stakeholder Project Steering Group will be essential in the next phase of work for the Roma Health Project.

The Pilot Project approach of targeted outreach advocacy supports to Roma, building on the approach taken in the Roma Health Project, was central to developing trust and progressing the situation of the Roma community. This targeted approach will continue to be an essential requirement, particularly in a context where Roma need significant support to understand and be enabled to access mainstream services. Ensuring a response to the needs assessment over the next phase of work for the Roma Health Project will be important to sustaining the trust of the local Roma community, which trust, in turn, will be key to enabling the Roma voice and Roma leadership to emerge in County Tipperary.

