



EXCHANGE HOUSE
Travellers Service

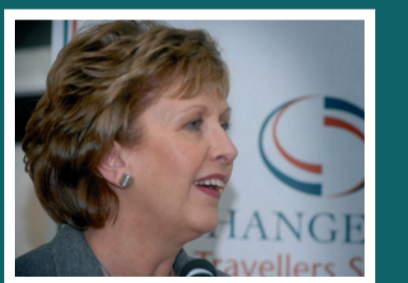
ANNUAL REVIEW 2007

“ On behalf of the Board of Directors of Exchange House Travellers Service, I offer my sincere gratitude to the Director, staff, volunteers and supporters for their relentless passion, commitment and dedication to one of the most vulnerable groups in the city of Dublin. Everyone at Exchange House is determined that the organisation become a centre of excellence in supporting Travellers to reach their full potential.



We could not continue without our funding, and I thank the HSE, the City of Dublin Youth Service Board, South Inner City Dublin Drug Task Force, FÁS, City of Dublin VEC, Pobal, Dept. of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs, Dept. of Education and Science and the EU through Socrates GRUNDTVIG and Minerva Programmes for their commitment to Ireland's Traveller community.

Hugh McDermott, Chair



“ It's the Traveller men, women and young people who come across that door, who make use of this fantastic chance and put it to use in their lives, making themselves stronger and making their communities stronger.

They are the people we really have to thank. ”

Mary McAleese, President of Ireland

Opening of the new premises of Exchange House, 7th November 2007

MOVING FORWARD WITH A STRONG FOUNDATION

Exchange House is an organisation of Travellers and settled people working together to provide Family Support Services, Drug Outreach, Research and Policy, Youth Work, Education Services and Community Development to the Traveller community in the greater Dublin area.

Since it was set up in 1980, Exchange House has operated from many different locations due to difficulties securing permanent premises. Being constantly on the move was an on-going challenge to

the development of the organisation and the delivery of services. Consequently the granting of a 20-year lease recently by the Christian Brothers brought great joy to staff, participants and all involved with Exchange House. This spacious building provides a wonderful base for the further development of services and programmes.

On Wednesday, 7th November 2007, President Mary McAleese officially opened the new premises of Exchange House Travellers Service on Great Strand

Street, Dublin 1, heralding a new phase in our development. We bring with us into the future a strong foundation of past achievements by current and former staff, Board members and supporters over almost three decades. With a current staff of 65 and an annual expenditure of approximately €1.4 million, we face the future with a determination to dedicate our efforts and resources to the benefit of the Traveller community and its place within this country.



PROGRAMMES DURING 2007

Education

The Education Department further developed as a centre of excellence for educational support to the Traveller community. We provided opportunities for youths and adults in basic literacy, further education/training and support to accessing third-level education, training and employment. Fundamental to our work is that a person's life experience is acknowledged and their potential is respected, endorsed and facilitated.

Literacy Service

We developed a one-to-one literacy service for people who are not engaged in programmes and need to develop their skills in the areas of reading, writing, spelling and numeracy. We have received additional support from the City of Dublin VEC to develop this new service.

Socrates – GRUNDTVIG – Minerva – a European partnership

We continued to participate in two European educational projects through Socrates GRUNDTVIG and Minerva Programmes. Drawing on input from literacy experts in a range of countries, these two projects are designing teaching modules in relation to intergenerational learning, senior citizens and young people and learning by technology including the use of specially programmed mobile phones for people with limited literacy.

Exchange House Community Employment Scheme

The Community Employment (CE) Scheme completed its first year in 2007. We have 15 participants, 10 in Exchange House and five working with outside sponsors. All participants take part in training events which are run in Exchange House. Basic Education programmes and Computer Training are on-going and a number of specialist training events have also been run throughout the

year. So far the participants have successfully completed FETAC 5 Occupational First Aid, Fire Safety, Personal Effectiveness, Telephone & Reception Skills and Prevention & Management of Violence & Aggression. Each participant has an Individual Learner Plan and is developing a clear idea of his/her long-term goals in relation to training and employment. As the participants' ideas develop, the type of training offered to them is changing and evolving. Exchange House acknowledges the vital support of FÁS to the delivery of this programme.

Exchange House Local Training Initiative

The Local Training Initiative (LTI) programme underwent further development during the year. Members of the group gained certification in both formal and informal education modules. In the past year, there have been many changes for the group, the most obvious is the move into Great Strand Street. The benefits are that the group is able to link into the many other services that Exchange House provides. During the year one of the participants was given the honour of presenting a copy of *Missing the Tobar* to the President Mary McAleese. *Missing the Tobar* is a result of a project involving the LTI group in Exchange House and other agencies to develop relevant reading material which helps people develop their reading skills and is now widely used in many education centres. The LTI programme is funded and supported by FÁS.

Family Support

There have been a lot of positive changes over the past year resulting in a new dynamic and vibrant team made up of two family support workers, two social workers and two drug outreach workers. The aim of the Family Support Team is to provide a range of services which include family support, social work and drug outreach service to members of the Traveller community.

Family Support

Each family using our services is offered a tailored package of support provided by our family support workers and social workers. The family plays an integral part in addressing their own needs thus empowering them to help themselves. The Family Support Workers have been very busy throughout 2007 providing practical and emotional support to families in times of crisis and on an ongoing basis. Support covers a diverse range of issues such as accommodation, health, welfare, education, leisure, youth work, parenting, and ensuring that families are linked into appropriate services. The family support workers are a vital part of the package of support given to our clients and work in tandem with the social workers and the drug outreach workers.

The social workers provide an outreach and in-house range of social work services to Traveller families and individuals. Over the past year, social workers have worked hard to provide support to Traveller families in crises. This involved:

- Ensuring children and families are linked into mainstream services;
- Working with the family support team to promote the welfare and health of all Traveller families accessing Exchange House services;
- Advocacy, crisis intervention, personal development, court accompaniment, supportive counselling and liaising with other voluntary and statutory agencies.

Drug Outreach workers

At Exchange House our drug outreach workers provide support for Travellers with addiction problems. The services offered during 2007 were:

- education and prevention;
- general health awareness regarding addictions;
- referral to appropriate treatment centres;
- harm reduction information.

The Family Support Team worked hard through 2007 to help Travellers empower themselves to address their own needs. The success of the work this year is reflected in the increasing number of families and individuals accessing the services, as well as the referrals from other agencies. Building up relationships and trust are the cornerstones of how the team works with families. We look forward in 2008 to working together with families and individuals to help themselves and improve their lives.

Youth Services

Exchange House Travellers Youth Service is the main provider of Youth Services to the Traveller Community in the greater Dublin area. During 2007, the Traveller Youth Service provided a range of activities designed to give young people positive opportunities to support their social and personal education. The main focus of these programmes was to enhance their personal educational and community development skills.

In providing these programmes, the Youth Service identified a need for a 'Stay In Schools' Initiative, currently being piloted in St. Margaret's Park, Ballymun, in partnership with the local schools. We also ran Leadership, Personal Development, Jeep Renovation and a Bullying Programme alongside our core Youth Service Programmes.

Through on-going evaluation, the Youth Service was re-structured and provided a very successful eight-week Summer Programme to all sites. The Youth Service employed two more full-time Youth Workers expanding our team to six members, allowing us to deliver more specifically targeted programmes to young people. The Youth Team has also taken part in different areas of education and training, which will enable us to provide a more diverse range of programmes.

The Youth Service will continue to develop programmes which will enable young people to take greater control of their own lives and play a more active part within their own community.

After-Schools

The Youth Service operates two after-schools programmes for 8-12 year olds in Labre Park and 6-13 year olds in St. Oliver's Park, providing a comprehensive programme of educational assistance to young people. Homework assistance, literacy support and computer skills are balanced with personal developmental activities such as arts and crafts, music and dance as well as a summer programme. In providing these programmes the after-schools have improved relationships with local schools and supported parents in taking a more active part in their children's education. Both programmes have been successful in achieving an increase in transfer rates from primary to second-level education. Co-ordinators and their staff aim to encourage school attendance and to promote a positive attitude to education.

Educational Away Programmes

Over the past year, the Youth Service has delivered three Educational Away Programmes to specific target groups of young people. These groups of young people are made up of young men and women who are engaged in specific programmes throughout the year. The Educational Away Programmes took place in France, Wicklow and Carlingford.

These types of programmes involve developing a positive relationship with young people ensuring that they know there is a sympathetic person available to listen to them and support them in achieving their goals. In the run-up to these activities, all participants took part in outdoor activities, team building and personal development programmes.

By delivering these programmes, the Youth Service has achieved and will continue to achieve strong working relationships with the potential to provide positive role models for young people.

Other Programmes

Community Development

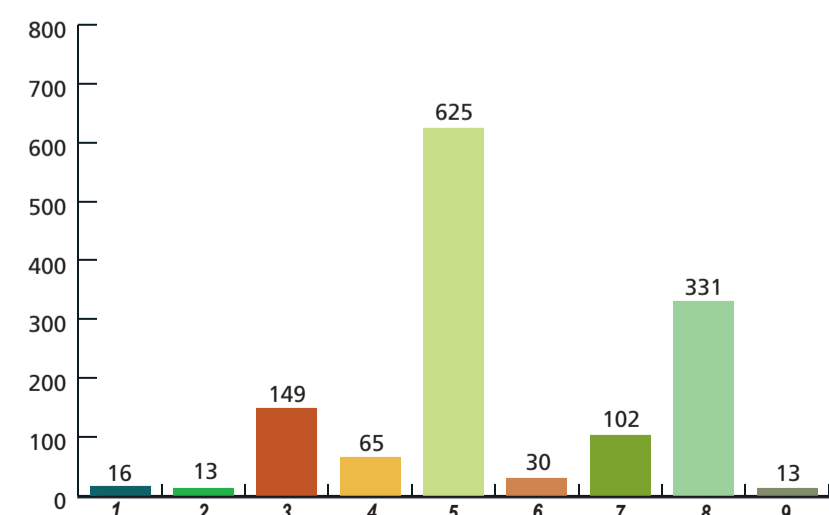
The formulation and implementation of Community Development strategies is essential to the empowerment of the Traveller Community in developing its own responses to identified needs. Exchange House works with key members of the Traveller community on specific sites in the Dublin area to achieve this aim.

Research and Policy

The aim is to identify gaps in current provision and to make recommendations as to future interventions. Research activities inform our service provision, reporting, advocacy work and education. Our research is disseminated to other service providers and relevant agencies. For example, in 2007 Exchange House completed research on domestic violence. Currently, we have commenced research on young Travellers living on the streets. By this we hope to identify and address the needs of Young Travellers.

INCOME AND EXPENDITURE 2007

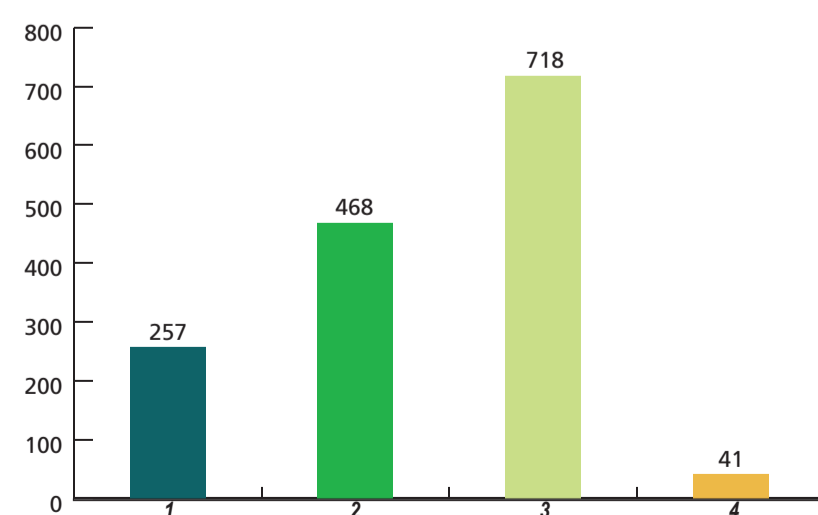
Expenditure € 000s



1. Literacy Services 2. European partnership 3. Community Employment Scheme 4. Local Training Initiative 5. Family Support 6. Drug Outreach 7. After School Projects 8. Youth Services 9. Research & Policy

Total: € 1,344,000

Income € 000s



1. State grants for Education Department 2. State grants for Youth Service 3. State grants for Family Support 4. Bequests and Donations

Total: € 1,484,000

LOOKING AHEAD

Exchange House has modified its services and the way they are delivered in response to clients' changing needs. The continued implementation of our Strategic Plan 2007-2010, the move to new premises, the increase in specialised staff and the development of individual departments will enable us to be more innovative in providing clients with services they need to face their daily challenges.

Education and Development Service

Our new premises on Great Strand Street provide us with a wonderful opportunity to develop a high quality centre for Education and Development for our client group. We have appointed a Team Leader with specific responsibility for developing the centre. The Strategic Plan 2007 - 2010 sets out a clear approach to enhancing the lives of our clients through engagement in learning and personal development for a better future for themselves and their families.

Youth Service

We work with young Travellers to empower them to have full participation and a positive influence on wider society.

Immediate plans include:

- Further development of our 'Stay In School' Initiative;
- Working with Exchange House Young Men's Group;
- Achieving improved Traveller attendance in schools;
- Working out of hours with young Travellers on the streets and completion of a research programme to identify and address their needs.

Family Support Service

We work with people, not for them, to increase their capacity to act on their own behalf. The Family Support Service has developed and expanded; now offering a flexible, outreach crisis intervention service to Travellers in the Dublin area, with family support workers and social workers. We work proactively with families to resolve problems from accommodation and welfare to family dynamics. We are a resource to Traveller drugs users and their families in accessing appropriate addiction services.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who has supported and made the achievements during 2007

possible. I know the work and services we provide make a difference in the lives of the Traveller families we support. The generosity of the Christian Brothers in providing us with a wonderful building in the heart of the city is remarkable. In addition, the on-going support of our funders is gratefully acknowledged. We continue to improve the effectiveness of our services and rely heavily on these partnerships to assist us. Most of all, I would like to thank the Traveller families and individuals who continue to access our services and through their endeavours realise our vision. We look forward to continuing to build stronger relationships.



Heydi Foster, Director