Action Research Project

What works in supporting Travellers' access and participation in higher education

Blanchardstown Traveller Development Group

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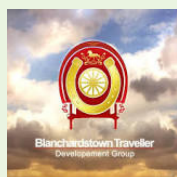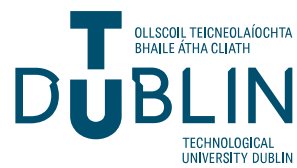
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Contents

Action Research Project

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty ('the duty') is a statutory obligation for public bodies in section 42 of the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014. Section 42(1) requires public bodies, in the performance of their functions, to have regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, promote equality and protect human rights of staff and people availing of their services. Section 42(2) requires public bodies to assess, address and report on progress in relation to equality and human rights in their strategic plan and annual reports in a manner that is accessible to the public.

This action research project funded under theme 2 'supporting compliance with the public sector Equality and Human Rights Duty' and strand 2 'locally based civil society organisations/groups' of the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission's Human Rights and Equality Grants Scheme aims to draw on the lessons from practice in engagement between the higher education institution and the local Traveller project toward greater access, participation and outcomes for Traveller students in higher education. The project will research the experience of this engagement between TU Dublin and the Blanchardstown Traveller Development Group, with a view to learning what works and to strengthening and enhancing the partnership towards greater benefits for Traveller students in Dublin 15 and surrounding areas. The project aims to support greater Traveller participation in courses offered by TU Dublin and to support TU Dublin's fulfilment of its obligations under the public sector duty in relation to access and support for Travellers.

Institutional and individual discrimination faced by Travellers in Irish society is reflected in the education system across the different levels. The lived experience of Travellers is one of marginalisation and exclusion. In education there are issues in gaining access to schools and colleges, progression and attainment at primary and post primary and it results in negative outcomes for members of the Traveller community in all levels of education. The historical legacy of segregation or "special classes" for Traveller learners where they received a substandard level of education at primary schools made it impossible for progression to secondary school and on to third level. These negative policies of the past have created an environment and thinking across the country where today we see the reduction of school hours for Traveller students at primary and second level and where schools have lower expectations for Traveller learners compared to their settled peers.

Latest figures show that just 1 per cent of Traveller students progress to third-level education compared with over 50 per cent of the mainstream settled community. This

finding is contained in a review of the Government's plan to boost numbers of marginalised groups in the higher-education system (Higher Education Authority, 2019).

Travellers are among the most marginalised groups in Ireland. The persistence of inequality in educational outcomes for the Traveller Community is a factor of that marginalisation (Irish Traveller Movement, 2004). The Report of the Task Force on the Traveller Community (1995) made 167 recommendations that related to education and training, which was more than half of the recommendations made in total in the report. This reflects the complexity of the education system from early education to lifelong learning but also the extent of the marginalisation facing Travellers in the Irish education system.

Action plan for increasing Traveller Participation in Higher Education 2019-2021

An initiative under the National Plan for Equity of Access to higher Education 2015-2021. The then Minister of State for Higher Education Mary Mitchell O'Connor wrote: 'understanding and providing for the needs of Travellers as they seek to access higher education is critical to ensuring that children and young people from the Traveller Community can fulfil their potential through education. Having a whole of education approach is important for enabling participation by Travellers in higher education. We need to fully embrace Traveller culture and traditions across the education spectrum' (Department of Education and Skills, 2019, p. 1). The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) published a research report in 2023 'Traveller culture and history' following the 2019 audit carried out by the NCCA on Traveller culture and history in the curriculum (NCCA, 2019). The 2023 research report will inform the plans for 'updating/redevelopment of curriculum' its use in schools.

The plan identifies Irish Travellers as one of the target groups that are currently underrepresented in higher education. While increases in participation of Irish Travellers are evident in the National Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education 2015-2021, there remains a significant challenge in achieving our goals in respect of the Traveller target group. There is difficulty in measuring the number of Traveller students in the higher education system, as self-identification is the only mechanism by which the information is captured.

Research question

What works in supporting Travellers' access and participation in higher education TU Dublin?

Aims

- To examine the barriers to Traveller engagement and participation in TU Dublin programmes.

- To examine supports which encourage access, retention and participation within TU Dublin

- To examine barriers Travellers may face when trying to access TU Dublin or for Travellers already attending college.

- To engage with Travellers who have attended or are attending TU Dublin via interviews/ questionnaires to gain information on their experience attending TU Dublin.

- To engage with the access and student services and academic staff of TU Dublin who have engaged with Travellers.

Key enquiry questions for Traveller research participants

1. *Can you identify barriers that you may have faced when trying to access college?*

2. *What if any specific supports are offered to Traveller students during their studies?*

3. *Have you any suggestions as to how Travellers can be supported or supported more when accessing and attending College?*

4. *Did you feel comfortable identifying as a Traveller in college or did you choose to keep it private and why?*

5. *Were there any systems in place that made it easier for you as a Traveller to attend college?*

6. *Was there anything you find difficult as a Traveller attending college?*

This research report is structured as follows. Chapter one sets out the purpose of this research project to identify what works in supporting Traveller access and participation in higher education. Chapter two sets out state policy on access and widening participation in higher education for traditionally under-represented groups including Traveller and Roma communities. Chapter three presents the public sector human rights and equality duty and how the university (TU Dublin) assesses, addresses and reports on their duty. Chapter four outlines the research methodology. Chapter five presents the findings followed by some key discussion points in chapter six. Chapter seven concludes the research with a number of recommendations for actions to increase Traveller access, participation and outcomes in TU Dublin and higher education generally.

2. STATE POLICY ON ACCESS AND WIDENING PARTICIPATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION

This chapter outlines the state's policy in relation to access and widening participation in higher education for under-represented groups including Travellers (and Roma), students with disability and mature students and students affected by socio-economic disadvantage. The latter groups with exception of Roma were the focus on the first national access plan (HEA, 2005) and continue with expanded groups in subsequent plans including the current fourth national access plan (HEA, 2022).

National Access Plans

Since the establishment of the National Access Office in 2005 within the Higher Education Authority, successive National Access Plans (National Office Access, HEA, 2005, 2008, 2015, 2022) have identified Travellers as one of the under-represented groups in higher education in Ireland. This has been the consequence of severe discrimination, racism and disadvantage experienced by Travellers which has been well documented in countless reports over decades in all spheres of life in Irish society; the economic, social, political, health, education, accommodation, culture and recreation spheres as referred to in the *National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy 2017-2021* (Dept. Justice and Equality, 2017).

The first target for Traveller access to higher education was set in 2015 at 80 Travellers in higher education by 2019, 'Number of Irish Travellers in higher education (full and part-time undergraduate new entrants) Current 25, Target 80' (HEA, 2015). The latest plan *National Access Plan 2022-2028* (HEA, 2022, p. 43) states that 'the number of students who are members of the Irish Traveller community has improved marginally but remains disappointingly low'. Whilst there were 119 students enrolled in HEIs in 2020/21 who were Irish Travellers compared to 78 in 2012/2013, the inequality gap remains unacceptably high. '1% of Travellers have a third-level qualification compared to 55% of the general population' (HEA, 2022, p.43).

In the current National Access Plan, the target set for new entrants from the Traveller community to higher education by 2028 is 150 or 0.32% of new entrants compared to the current new entrant rate of 33 or 0.07% of new entrants in 2022. Whilst there is no target set for Roma participation in higher education, the plan commits to developing targets for Roma students when accurate baseline data becomes available. It is intended to use data from the Student Record Systems (SRS) Equal Access Survey data (National Access Office 2022, p.83). Census 2022 included Roma for the first time under the ethnic

identifier question asked of all respondents. Since 2014, all parents of primary school children (and post primary school children) were asked to complete an 'ethnic identifier' question in school enrolment forms (Pavee Point, 2014). This is now included in the primary online database and post-primary online database.

> 'The school enrolment database allows students to voluntarily self-identify their ethnicity. The refined DEIS identification model includes a component to reflect the level of educational disadvantage experienced by students who have self-identified as Traveller or Roma' *The Refined DEIS identification model* (DES, 2022, p.7).

Whilst an ethnicity self-declaration option also applies to all students registering at third level the issue of 'hiding identity' or 'non-disclosure' of identity affects minority ethnic groups more than the majority ethnic groups in a country. This may lead to under-stated numbers of Traveller and Roma students in third level education. That said, the improvement in data collection to measure equality indicators marks important progress in the higher education sector, but more must be done in this area.

The statement by the National Athena SWAN Ireland Intersectionality Working Group on the Use of Ethnicity Categories in Irish Higher Education of May 2020 places data collection on ethnicity within the context of the HEI's public sector duty.

'We understand the collection of staff and student ethnicity data to be central to the implementation of the Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty, deriving from section 42 of the Irish Human Rights and Equality Act 2014. Under this Act, all public Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) must undertake assessment and monitoring, and have policies and plans to promote equality, prevent discrimination and protect the human rights of staff, students and the wider public that are served by the work of HEIs.' (HEA, 2020, p. 1)

The National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy
On 1st March 2017, Ireland finally officially recognised the Traveller community as 'an ethnic group within the Irish nation' (Statement of An Taoiseach, Houses of the Oireachtas, 1st March 2017). In June 2017, following a period of consultations with Traveller and Roma representative groups and organisations, the government published the *National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy 2017 – 2021* (DJE, 2017). Minister of State for Equality, Immigration, and Integration, David Stanton TD, commented in the Foreword, 'as a former teacher, I am concerned by the poor education completion rates of both Traveller and Roma children and youths. Action is needed now, across the public sector, to address these and many other problematic issues'.

In the research project catchment area, Blanchardstown Traveller Development Group a local community development group has been in existence for over 30 years. Over the life of the group, it has carried out a range programmes, courses and initiatives to address the inequalities experienced by Travellers in education. The 2008 cuts in the Traveller education budget have had a detrimental effect on Traveller access and attainment in education with €57million cut from the programs nationally (Harvey, 2012, Irish Traveller Movement 2011).

Education along with lack of Traveller cultural identity reflected in schools, lack of access to employment and lack of support for the Traveller economy, lack of culturally appropriate accommodation, and access to public services are areas where Travellers and Roma experience systemic racism and discrimination both from mainstream society and institutions. The chapter on education commits the Department of Education to a number of actions from pre-school early years right through to third level education and lifelong learning to achieve positive 'access, participation and outcomes for Travellers and Roma in education that are equal to those for the majority population' (DJE, 2017, p. 25).

In line with the National Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education (2015-2019), the Department of Education and Skills will support the development by the higher education sector of a network of peer support and mentoring for Travellers and Roma in third level education.

There are also actions to increase the number of Travellers and Roma in higher education teacher training courses and early years education courses to increase the numbers of teachers from the Traveller and Roma communities. There is a commitment that the Department of Education and Skills that will ensure initial teacher education and continuing professional development (CPD) programmes in inclusive education will attend to the needs of all students from all cultural backgrounds and that the Teaching Council will examine how intercultural, anti-racism and diversity are included in initial teacher training and education courses in higher education. At primary and post primary level, from where Traveller and Roma young people will go on to third level, there is an action to address the areas of anti-racism, identity-based bullying and cultural awareness (DJE, 2017, pp. 25-26). The strategy also commits the Department to engage with Traveller and Roma organisations and employer bodies to promote greater Traveller and Roma participation in apprenticeships and traineeships' (DJE, 2017, p.26). In this regards, in the higher education sector, technological universities are uniquely placed as providers of level 6 to 10 awards including apprenticeships.

TU Dublin Submission to National Access Plan 2022-2028

The current national access plan invited consultation submissions which it used in drawing up its current national access plan 2022-2028 during the covid pandemic. TU Dublin made a 38 page submission. In response to the question 'Who are the target groups that should be specified in the next National Access Plan?' Irish Travellers were named (p. 5), however the submission goes on to state 'At present Travellers are the only ethnic minority currently recognised as a targeted group. This could be extended to all students from a Roma, Traveller, Black and Minority Ethnic background' (TU Dublin 2022A, p.7). Students who are Irish Travellers indicated that their accommodation location did not have access to Wi-Fi/broadband and was often not in future governmental plans' (p. 37).

In response to the question as to 'how can pre-entry and post-entry activities be developed?', the submission recommends Higher Education & Education-Community Partnerships for example 'to develop pre-entry and post-entry activities through collaboration between the access offices of our third level institutions and community-based projects and organisations representing the interests of the particular under-represented groups (e.g. Disability Advocacy Groups, Centres for Independent Living, Traveller Projects, Roma groups' (TU Dublin 2022, p. 10).

TU Dublin Policy & Practice on Access Widening Participation for Traveller and Roma Community

TU Dublin website is the public facing page of Access and Widening Participation in the university. Currently in keeping with all higher education institutions a staffed access and widening participation function is growing and developing in the new university. This builds on the work in this area of the three former legacy IT's (Dublin Institute of Technology, IT Blanchardstown and IT Tallaght. The webpage outlines the aim of Access TU Dublin as 'we aim to ensure that students of all backgrounds and nationalities can find a pathway to higher education that suits their circumstances at different stages of their lives and careers' (TU Dublin, 2023). The criteria for eligibility for access supports includes 'Member of the Traveller community (Automatic Eligibility on supply of documented proof)'. As the new university develops it is likely the criteria will be updated to include Roma.

In 2023, the university introduced two posts for Access and Outreach Project Officer to work particularly with the Traveller and Roma communities to increase access from both communities to degree courses in TU Dublin. Funds for the posts were provided by the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research and Innovation through the HEA's PATH 5 funding (Programme for Access to Higher Education) (HEA, 2023). 'PATH 5 was

announced as a key component of the new National Access Plan (2022-2028) which was launched in August 2022. The key objective of this funding stream is to enable HEIs to put in place an infrastructure to increase the participation of Traveller and Roma students in Higher Education' (HEA, 2023).

A clear priority for the new National Access Plan (National Access Office, 2022) is to train and recruit more teachers from the Traveller and Roma communities teaching in our schools. This research suggests the presence of a staff member in access or student services and indeed among the academic staff provides an important role model for students from the Traveller and Roma community. It also creates a better sense of belonging for the Traveller and Roma students when they see staff from their own community working in the university.

3. TU DUBLIN PUBLIC SECTOR DUTY AND ACCESS POLICY

The Public Sector Duty Explained

The Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission was established under the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014 following amalgamation of the former Equality Authority and the Irish Human Rights Commission. 'All public bodies in Ireland have responsibility to promote equality, prevent discrimination and protect the human rights of their employees, customers, service users and everyone affected by their policies and plans. This is a legal obligation, called the Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty, and it originated in Section 42 of the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014' (IHREC, 2023). The legislation requires public bodies such as higher education institutions like TU Dublin to assess, address and report on human rights and equality issues as part of its public sector duty obligations. The Commission provides support, guidance and education to public bodies to implement the duty as well as legal powers to monitor and enforce compliance with the duty.

Section 42, Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014

(1) A public body shall, in the performance of its functions, have regard to the need to—

> *(a) eliminate discrimination,*

> *(b) promote equality of opportunity and treatment of its staff and the persons to whom it provides services, and*

> *(c) protect the human rights of its members, staff and the persons to whom it provides services.*

(2) For the purposes of giving effect to subsection (1), a public body shall, having regard to the functions and purpose of the body and to its size and the resources available to it—

> *(a) set out in a manner that is accessible to the public in its strategic plan (howsoever described) an assessment of the human rights and equality issues it believes to be relevant to the functions and purpose of the body and the policies, plans and actions in place or proposed to be put in place to address those issues, and*

> *(b) report in a manner that is accessible to the public on developments and achievements in that regard in its annual report (howsoever described).*

TU Dublin and the Public Sector Duty

As a constituent higher education institution funded through the HEA, TU Dublin is Ireland's first technological university established in 2019. Over the past four years, since its designation and establishment on 1st January 2019 the university has been reviewing, amalgamating, integrating and developing policies and procedures for the new university, building on the legacy institutions, Dublin Institute of Technology, IT Tallaght and IT Blanchardstown. There is an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Directorate within the new university which has been developing a number of strategies relevant to TU Dublin's human rights and equality public sector duty. These include the Race Equity Strategy, the Anti Racism Principles for Higher Education, the Equality Statement and the Athena SWAN Action Plan.

TU Dublin Plan of Change for Race Equity 2021-2026

TU Dublin's Race Equity Strategy *TU Dublin Plan of Change for Race Equity 2021-2026* (TU Dublin, 2021) states 'TU Dublin will build an intercultural university that is anti-racist and facilitates a true sense of belonging and empowerment for all members of the university community. We will do this through researched evidence, education, awareness-raising, understanding and active engagement with one another, with the historical, structural, institutional and individual dimensions of racism, and with the needs of our local and global communities' (TU Dublin, 2021, p. 3).

The strategy adopts the Irish Network Against Racism (INAR) definition of racism; 'Any action, practice, policy, law, speech, or incident which has the effect (whether intentional or not) of undermining anyone's enjoyment of their human rights, based on their actual or perceived ethnic or national origin or background, where that background is that of a marginalised or historically subordinated group. Racism carries connotations of violence because the dehumanisation of ethnic groups has been historically enforced through violence (INAR, cited in TU Dublin, 2021, p.3).

The race equity strategy commits to anti-racism awareness-raising among university leadership, academic and administrative staff and all students. The strategy has a strong evidence base and commits to diversifying the curriculum. The strategy sets five institutional priorities under (i) research and innovation, (ii) education and awareness-raising and (iii) embedding a race equity mindset.

Traveller and Roma communities are named in the strategy as follows;

'Although the evidence base in TU Dublin does not enable us to identify distinct experiences specific to Traveller, Roma, Black or other Minority Ethnic communities, the

broader literature indicates that racism in the Irish context takes many forms, the most prevalent being anti-Black racism, anti-Traveller racism, anti-Muslim racism, anti-Roma racism, anti-migrant racism (xenophobia) and anti-Jewish racism (or antisemitism) (INAR 2020, p.13)' (TU Dublin, 2021, p.4).

There is a commitment to establishing a 'Traveller, Roma, Black, and Minority Ethnic staff network in TU Dublin' (p. 8) and to increase the number of professional, management and support staff (PMSS) from these backgrounds. This would also be an important goal for the academic staff profile of TU Dublin and other HEIs. There are a small but significant number of Travellers who have been awarded Masters and PhDs in recent years and similarly for other Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities.

In relation to the subject matter of this research project, the strategy includes a goal; 'Through TU Dublin Widening Participation and Engagement strategies, to work with primary and secondary level schools re the retention of Roma and Traveller students and their progression to third level' (p. 11).

Overall, the Race Equity Strategy and it's implementation should form part of overall assessment phase of TU Dublin's public sector human rights and equality duty.

TU Dublin Signs Race Equality: Anti-Racism Principles for Irish Higher Education Institutions.

On 6th September 2023, TU Dublin signed the Higher Education Authority's Race Equality: Anti-Racism Principles for Irish Higher Education Institutions. The document sets out six anti-racism principles summarised as follows; (i) racism is a problem in Ireland and in higher education institutions, (ii) allowing race inequality blocks potential, (iii) anti-racism policies and activities must focus on long-term culture and system change, (iv) racism is not always overt, it manifests in everyday microaggressions, (v) race inequalities are experienced differently by people of similar and different ethnic backgrounds, and (vi) race inequality can intersect with other inequalities e.g. gender, sexual orientation, disability.

The document also commits TU Dublin to advance race equality including by educating staff and students 'in relation to the structural, institutional, and historical dimensions of racism', as well as the 'recording of student and staff data disaggregated by ethnicity to inform our anti-racism policies and actions. The university further commits to 'monitor retention and career outcomes for students and staff from minority ethnic groups including Travellers'.

TU Dublin Equality Statement

Under the Higher Education Authority Act 2022 (Section 62) each higher education institution must prepare an equality statement setting out '(a) the policy of the institution for enabling access to it, and the education it provides, by students in priority groups and persons in those groups seeking to become students,' and '(b) the policy of the institution relating to equality, including gender equality, in all activities of the institution' (62, 5).

Similarly under the Technological Universities Act 2018 (Section 19), all higher education institutions must prepare an equality statement setting out '(a) the policy of the technological university for enabling access to it, and the education it provides, by economically or socially disadvantaged persons, by persons who have a disability and by persons from sections of society significantly under-represented in the student body, and (b) the policy of the technological university relating to equality, including gender equality, in all activities of the technological university'. (19,2)

TU Dublin is currently consulting with stakeholders including staff and students on the content of the Equality statement. Based on examples of equality statements of other HEIs it would be preferable that minority ethnic groups including Traveller and Roma be specifically named in the Equality Statement to advance recognition and visibility in the university.

Maynooth University specifically names and includes Travellers in the university's Equality Statement.

'It seeks to develop and implement policies and procedures which promote equality and which avoid unfair discrimination on grounds of age, disability, membership of the Traveller community, marital status, family status, gender, religion, social class, sexual orientation, race, colour, nationality or ethnic or national origins.' (Maynooth University, 2018)

The Munster Technological University also specifically names Travellers and other ethnic minorities in their equality statement;

'MTU commits to providing equity of access and participation in life-long education regardless of gender, civil status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, race (which includes colour, nationality or ethnic or national origins), membership of the Traveller community, or socioeconomic background'.

Athena SWAN

The Athena SWAN Self-Assessment Team (responsible for advancing gender equality) developed an annual Equality and Inclusion Survey in October 2020 for TU Dublin. The introduction stated *'as part of its Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty, TU Dublin is working to eliminate discrimination; promote equality of opportunity for staff and students; and protect the human rights of staff and students'*. Travellers are included as membership of the Traveller community as well as race and gender make up one of the nine protected grounds in Irish equality and anti-discrimination legislation.

TU Dublin Strategic Plans

The public sector human rights and equality duty requires public bodies including higher education institutions such as TU Dublin to assess, address and report on relevant human rights and equality issues affecting staff, students and service users of the university.

Whilst the public sector duty is not explicitly named in the *Strategic Intent 2030 Realising Infinite Possibilities*, there is implicit commitment in that the strategy is one of the first of any university in the country to be underpinned by the UN Sustainable Development Goals and in particular SDG 4 'Quality Education' (*TU Dublin Strategic Intent 2030*). SDG 4 (UN, 2023).

SDG4 quality education aims to *'ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all'*. Under target 5 within SDG 4, there is explicit reference to under-represented groups in education and aims to *'ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples and children in vulnerable situations'* (UN, 2023, SDG4, Target 5).

The strategic plan 2023 is now completed and consultations are being undertaken for the Strategic Plan 2024-2028.

TU Dublin Strategic Plan 2024-2028

There is an opportunity in the new Strategic Plan 2024-2028 to explicitly refer to TU Dublin's public sector human rights and equality duty and this should be embedded in all levels and functions of the university. In preparing for this plan, the background context reading includes the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science's Statement of Strategy 2021-2023. In the section on values (DFHERIS, 2021, p.7) the department aspires to 'treat our colleagues and those to whom we provide services equitably, in keeping with our Public Sector Human Rights and Equality obligations'.

4. METHODOLOGY

To undertake this research, Blanchardstown Traveller Development Group appointed a peer researcher from the Traveller community. This chapter outlines the research methodology, research participant sample, data collection method and data analysis and ethical considerations.

Research methodology

For this small scale research case study, a qualitative research approach was used. Qualitative research is particularly useful for probing experiences, reflections on that experience, feelings and evaluations. It is useful in researching smaller cohorts of people sharing common experiences with similar institutions as is the case in this research. This research examines Travellers' experiences in the higher education institution. Quantitative research is important and useful to establish numerical measures, rates, levels of participation comparing the sample to the general population (Denscombe, 2010) Quantitative statistical research has already confirmed the deeply unequal levels of participation of Travellers in higher education compared to the general population.

Research participants sample

The research sample for this small scale research case study was a purposive research sample. Denscombe (2010, p. 35) describes purposive sampling as a method of gathering 'the best information through focusing on a relatively small number of instances deliberately selected on the basis of their known attributes (i.e. not through random selection). With purposive sampling the sample is 'hand-picked' for the research on the basis of: relevance to the issue/theory being investigated and knowledge privileged knowledge or experience about the topic'. 4 students from the Traveller community who studied in TU Dublin participated in questionnaire interviews. Questionnaires were given to Travellers who are attending TU Dublin at present or who have graduated from TU Dublin and were willing to be involved and consented to their contributions being included in the research with the normal research anonymity guarantees. Two Access Officer staff from two HEIs were also interviewed given their particular knowledge and experience of the issue of Traveller access to higher education.

Data collection

Questionnaire interviews were undertaken with the research participants. The questions (also referred to in the introduction) are included below and in appendix 2.

1. *Can you identify barriers that you may have faced when trying to access college?*

2. *What if any specific supports are offered to Traveller students during their studies?*

3. *Have you any suggestions as to how Travellers can be supported or supported more when accessing and attending College?*

4. *Did you feel comfortable identifying as a Traveller in college or did you choose to keep it private and why?*

5. *Were there any systems in place that made it easier for you as a Traveller to attend college?*

6. *Was there anything you find difficult as a Traveller attending college?*

Specific interview questions were also compiled for Access Officers and presented in appendix 2.

Data Analysis

Research participant responses were recorded for the purposes of exploring issues and answering questions by analysing and making sense of the unstructured data. A thematic qualitative analysis was carried out on the questionnaire interview responses.

Ethical considerations

The peer researcher explained the purpose of the research to the research participants. Participants were informed of their voluntary consent rights in participating in the research including their right to withdraw from the research at any time. Participants were provided with anonymity guarantees and use of participant A, B, C etc. to remove any identifiers from the individual responses. The information sheet for the access officers' interviews is included in appendix 1.

Traveller Students Finding

1.   *Can you identify any barriers that you faced when trying to access college?*

(Student A) 'I found that this was a major challenge, I was lucky enough to be on a CE scheme in a Traveller Organisation and this is how I gained the knowledge and know how to apply in the first place for college but previous to this I did not have a clue in regards to how to apply through the CAO or the process. The Traveller organisation I was in helped me with the application, this was great support as without it I would not have started my journey through third level.' (Practical support including a laptop and printer was also provided by the Traveller organization).

(Student B) 'from my own experience the hardest part of trying to access college would be not knowing where to start as I had no other friends or family who have done 3rd level education. Also, there was little or no promotion of bursaries or grants that were aimed at marginalised groups i.e. Travellers'.

(Student C) 'I was not sure how to apply for colleges, I had known of the CAO application but I thought it was a hard process so this turned me off applying, before applying to go to college I always thought that I needed the amount of points in the leaving certificate to get into college, but it was not the case as there are other routes to get into college such as being a mature student'.

(Student D) 'not while applying for college but unfortunately due to my address being unofficial SUSI grant was very difficult as it took a long time for my college fees to come through, I had to have a local TD help to sort it out.'
'Regarding TU Dublin, no barriers as a mature student, being a Traveller, it would have helped if there was a service to call and receive more information'.

2. What if any specific supports are offered to Traveller students during their studies in TU Dublin?

(Student A) 'I began my studies in September 2014 and at that time there were no supports for Traveller students, I was the only member of my community in the university at the time. I hid my identity for the first six months. I felt a little isolated. I also overheard some nasty terms being used during this time regarding people from my community'.

'no one knew that I was a Traveller and I didn't bring it up, until one day a class member asked me and I told her yes. Things didn't change much because people like me for who I was before they found out about my identity.'

'sometimes I would be in the canteen and I would see a group of Muslim students together and I would envy them having friends and classmates from the same culture studying together , I used to think wouldn't it be great if I had a few members of my Community here studying and mixing and having that third level journey together'

(Student B) 'not that I am aware of'.

(Student C) 'there are lots of supports available within the college such as reading, writing, help with assignments, help towards costs of going to college such as student assistant fund, but there is no specific Traveller supports'.

(Student D) 'there was a college network learning centre, this was to help all students who were facing difficulties with assignments and anything related to college, I personally did not use this service but fellow students did, also students services who I worked closely with during my third year and they go above and beyond for students, I found the student services in TU Dublin excellent'.
'Each student was treated fairly, equally and respectfully, also while I was working with student services staff, they gave me lots of information regarding funding for Traveller students within the college and helped me with a lot throughout my time there.'
'But not to my knowledge there was not specific supports for Travellers but to be fair my lecturers had a great understanding of the Traveller Community and values; we had one lecturer who worked very closely with the Traveller Community so it was also very helpful'.

3. *Have you any suggestions as to how Travellers can be supported or supported more when accessing and attending College?*

(Student A) 'I did not know I had a dyslexia issue until I attended third level. Travellers need support for this, they also need extra supports in place to help them get placements and for when they leave college a career guidance option to help them find work and overcome the hurdles that exist within the employment industry for Travellers'.

(Student B) 'look for a course you like on courses.ie and look for an access office to help you find a way into 3rd level'.

(Student C) 'it's the parents who need to be targeted to highlight how important education is for Travellers, the journey of how to get into college also needs more awareness around it such as CAO applications, bursaries, SUSI funding, the supports available in college and so on.'

'Young Travellers in education should also visit colleges to see and explore what they do. Most Travellers leave education before they complete their junior certificate as the college tours usually occur in transition year, maybe this should be changed to first year for Travellers so they can see colleges, this may possibly make them stay in education and continue onto third level.'

(Student D) 'Sometime the CAO can be tough to go through online and at times confusing, maybe a service that can help with the CAO system'.
'perhaps a staff member in student services who is a Traveller so that if Traveller student is finding it difficult they can go and speak to that staff member in a confidential way, for us Travellers no matter how nice a member of the settled community is and how helpful sometimes it can just be easier to identify with and easier to talk to another Traveller'.

4. *Did you feel comfortable identifying as a Traveller in college or did you choose to keep it private and why?*

(Student A) 'the first course I ever did was a PLC course in a college, I told everyone I was a Traveller from day one. But because of the experiences I had in there with the students I chose to hide my identity in TU Dublin, it was something I did unconsciously, it must have been over my previous college experience.

(Student B) 'yes I did feel comfortable, the reason for this is that the class was very sound, there were also many different cultures, as much as we had differences the most important thing we know is that we all shared a common goal of trying to better our

community. To be honest it was probably easier to say I was a Traveller in college than to say I was in college to some Travellers'.

(Student C) 'I did disclose I was a Traveller, everyone was shocked and asked a lot of questions which made me uncomfortable, some students made comments such as 'you don't sound or look like a Traveller' I felt I had to defend myself that not all Travellers look or sound the same, I think if I was on a different course to the youth and community I might not have disclosed that I was a Traveller as the Community and Youth (Course) is all about inclusion'.

(Student D) 'first year I would have told a group of students that I had formed friendships with, they were a little taken aback as I didn't sound and look like a stereotypical Traveller, but they didn't have any issues with it and once respect was given no issues ever arose'. 'During second term I began to feel more confident, and I spoke up more in class regarding Travellers and identified myself more to college staff and lecturers as a Traveller'.
'TU Dublin was in my experience a very inclusive college and each student is treated fairly and respectfully regardless of their background or culture'.

5. *Were there any systems in place that made it easier for you as a Traveller to attend college?*

(student A) 'The only supports I received was before I went into college, the application process. When I was in college the responsibility was all on my shoulders. It was through me reporting back to the Traveller organisation I was linked with that I was able to gain the supports that I needed. I received a spelling waiver in my exams because I asked it for myself because I was made aware by someone in the Traveller organisation I was in contact with'.

(Student B) 'no it was fair and equal for all'.

(Student C) 'no, I think it was the same process as everyone else which is not good as most Travellers are not aware of the CAO application form, they are not aware of other stuff such as accessing college as a mature student, as the rate of Travellers attending college is low maybe the process of accessing college should be made different for Travellers or should be made easier'.

6. *Was there anything that you found difficult as a Traveller attending college?*

(Student A) 'It was very difficult, I was married at the time with a child, the cultural expectations of being male in the Traveller community and all the conforming elements

that comes with that, sometimes I would feel shame or anxiety walking into where I lived wearing a school bag. I also found the digital device a huge issue because I had no WIFI in my caravan, I had no proper study environment to do my assignments while other students in my class did.'

(Student B) 'Being the 1st in my community to attend 3rd level was daunting as I didn't know what the reaction of my family and peers would be'.

(Student C) 'No I felt very comfortable in the college, I never found anything difficult'.

(Student D) 'just getting my head around all the studying and exams while dealing with a very complicated and busy home life'.

'I felt like quitting a few times but I always reminded myself only 1% of the Traveller community complete third level and it was my goal to better myself and find a job that makes a difference in my community'.

Access Officer Findings: Access Officer 1
1) ***Could you tell us a bit about your role as a Traveller Education Co-ordinator?***

'Before I started the role I was in schools, I was doing work with young Traveller boys and girls, And getting them so far and telling them both so much and then it felt like I wasn't almost able to continue that journey with them if they did want to progress to third level because I didn't have the power or the means to do that. So when I started in this role it was great because it was like, right now I'm here and I can actually walk hand in hand with these students and get them across the line. So, it's brilliant'.

'Funding came through with the introduction of the SOAR project, it's national funding.'

'Our main focus is Travellers in education.'

'we're the Travellers in education work stream. I know throughout the country there's other work streams, but I think we're the only one where an entire work stream is dedicated to Travellers and Education.'

'My role was in Traveller education across the board transitions from second level to third level'

2) ***Why is it important to have Traveller Education Co-ordinators or Traveller Access Officers in universities? i.e. What difference does it make having staff members who are themselves from the Traveller or Roma communities?***

'The children open more, or they will tell me more or they will participate that much better. And as I noticed this, I ensured that when I was coming into a project that that

room was mine and that session was mine and only mine, And the only reason there would be another body in the room is if I required it, it was very evident to me in that eight-year stretch that if there was a settled person in the room it completely changed the dynamic.'

3) What added value comes from employing staff who have direct experience of being a Traveller coming through higher education and how has your experience as a member of the Traveller community coming through higher education informed your work now as an Access Officer?

'If I have a student in front of me that might say a certain thing that would mean something, and I would understand it. I would know to either continue with that conversation or just completely drop it, whereas another person might not understand that in the same way. So, for example, if there are two Traveller families not getting on in a locality. I know not to have those 2 children in the same room at once. And that's how it influences. Whereas if that were my settled counterpart going into that school and didn't know those families, they could possibly be put together in that room.' In my very, very early days first year that I began teaching, I did that very thing because I didn't know what's going on in the area and I didn't know the families involved and I pushed 2 groups of kids into a room, and I had to separate 2 fights.'

4) What are the current and past outcome rates for Travellers accessing your university?

Did you ever collect data in relation to numbers of Travellers / Roma who registered?

'Yes, In 2019 to 20,that was the first year I was employed. I had 3 students engaging with me through the office.

Academic Year	Number of Travellers / Roma students registered with Access Service
2019-20	3
2020-21	4
2021-22	6
2022-2023	7

'And this year (2023-24) I'm expecting 5, But I'm hoping we'll find some more.'

5) Can you identify any barriers that Travellers may face when trying to access your university?

'I think the biggest one I think for any individual and just based on the conversations that I've had with our students and maybe students that have spoken to me through my teaching is always the opinions of others from the Traveller community. I think that's a big one. So I'm just thinking if they could be a young, 14 or 15 year old sitting at home and they might be thinking, oh I'd love to go to college, but then they might mention that to a friend or family member and it's completely shut down. Just this week I spoke to somebody, a colleague here of mine, she had met somebody and a night out that happened to be Traveller man and woman and the woman saying I would love to be a teacher, it would be great if I could be a teacher, and my colleague as she works in education herself was saying you can still go back to college, but the husband shut down the conversation and said, look, we're Travellers. She's going to be sitting at home, it's her job to mind children and make the dinner. And that's it. And I know Ireland is small but depending on where you live and the community you live in, attitudes can differ hugely.'

'Even in my own family, I grew up, my parents were very pro education, but I had aunts and uncles who would send comments my way such as 'what's the point you're wasting the best years of your life.'

'If they're young mothers, it's childcare'.

6) What if any specific supports are offered to Traveller students during their studies?

'I have set aside a budget, I strongly (kind of) proposed for a budget, specifically for Travellers, I had proposed for a budget specifically for the Traveller students which I could use at my discretion, So that has helped people with things like travel now I know that's covered under the SAF (Student Assistance Fund) but the thing with the with the Traveller specific one is the students will come into me and tell me certain things whereas they won't tell the other people in the office, So I would know certain things whereas others won't. It has also supported another Traveller to do an Erasmus in Germany, to help pay for accommodation there.

7) What new activities have you introduced in access to encourage more Travellers to access college?

'There are events throughout the year specifically for Travellers who are invited to come, whether it's a coffee morning or a lunch. We are going to have about 30 students and staff who are Travellers come together and do a 'bonding' day. We will do a bonding activity and go for dinner and go home, there is no agenda, there is no report, it's just

completely social aspect of getting to know each other. Because you're not just getting to know each other, your name, you're making potential contacts for the next stage of your career.

8) Has the Access Office organised for staff of the university any cultural awareness or anti-Traveller racism training?

'I insisted that we ran Traveller culture awareness training. So, we did now. I didn't need to insist because the office here was quite good anyway, they were happy to do it and it was kind of common for them anyway because they now had me as a worker, and I had all these new projects and they're very good in the sense that they really do genuinely want to be more aware. So we did run TCA training and a lot of people came, but what I could see from the people that came like always, it's the people that are already open-minded, you know. You don't need to reach to them. So we decided we would run it again and it was ran again through Covid and was ran online that time. We had much bigger numbers.'

9) Has the university hosted any culture days, festivals, e.g. Traveller Pride etc.?

'Not yet, last year was my first full year. I spent the entire year trying to organise one. And it just didn't happen because there's too many elements that I was trying to pull together. So, it is planned for March. Now it's not going to be a day, it's going to be a schedule of events over a week and it will be things like (maybe) an art exhibition, we may run 2 or 3 lunchtime sessions across the week and then maybe finish it with like maybe a panel discussion'

Access Officer Findings: Access Officer 2

1 What are the current participation rates of Travellers accessing the university?

This year we have 3 Travellers entering 1st year fulltime undergraduate courses out of a total of 5046 entrants).

PATH 1916 Bursary Grantees	Number of students who identified as Traveller
2018-19	3
2021-22	1
2022-23	3 (across campuses)

* Numbers of Traveller / Roma students on the Access Foundation Programme not available for this report.

2   What are the past outcome rates of Travellers graduating from the university?

We only had 1 Access Student who identified as a Traveller in my whole time working in Access. She graduated, it was over 10 years ago. There have been more but only one identified as Traveller.

Three students from the 2018-19 cohort are down 2 x graduated, 1 completing modules.

3   Can you identify any barriers from your university that Travellers may face when trying to access?

All campuses in the university are not involved in Traveller Networks.

There is no strong tradition of Travellers coming to the university (but close links with a local Traveller organisation on one campus).

A lot of Travellers choose courses in the humanities. Some other universities would have more established networking with Traveller organisations and networks. .

However, there is limited targeted outreach to Travellers starting to grow.

The university doesn't promote Traveller / Minceiri days like other HEI's, days like these can attract members of the Traveller community to campus.

The outreach and access work needs resources, a long term, multi-agency investment approach. From ABC's at 0-6 years, primary school, secondary school and FE college approach.

4   What, if any, specific supports are offered to Traveller students during their studies?

Proactive dedicated targeted support for an Access Student – access orientation, peer mentoring, financial advice and guidance, academic support, social events, dedicated staff support officer, leadership and external mentoring opportunities.

If not linked with the Access support team – It really depends on whether the student makes themselves known. There are learning supports available for support on the campus, an academic writing centre on one campus access support teams available on two other campuses.

5   What further education and training courses does your university offer?

Access Foundation Programme – (NFQ) Level 6 minor award

Access to Apprenticeship

6   Did you ever collect data in relation to these questions or can you answer any of the questions above specifically around supports and barriers?

If a registered Access Student or a 1916 Bursary recipient – yes.

Q. Can you identify barriers that you may have faced when trying to access college?

Findings from the research indicated that the Travellers trying to access college found it difficult as they did not know where to start. Some were initially reluctant to apply as they thought the CAO process was too hard and they didn't know how to do it. Some were under the impression that there were no other routes apart from the points system to get into college and were unaware of the other access routes available, such as applying as a mature student. Some stated that the fees were an obstacle and that there was little or no information available to them about bursaries or grants for Travellers attending college.

The findings show that what works is the link that Travellers have with Traveller organisations to find out information about college courses and access routes and to find out information about fees and grants that they are entitled to. Students felt that the process of applying was difficult so suggestions could be made to make the application process easier for Travellers to encourage them to apply to college.

Q. What if any specific supports are offered to Traveller students during their studies in TU Dublin?

Some of those involved stated that there were no Traveller specific supports available to them, some stated that there were lots of supports available in the college but not specific to Travellers.

From information gathered from TU access programmes, a designated Traveller specific access worker is something that is in the process of happening and will be greatly beneficial to Travellers attending the college and applying. Since 2018 there has been a designated Traveller Support Officer in TU Shannon[1].

Q. Are there any systems in place that made it easier for you as a Traveller to attend college?

Overall the majority agreed that there were no specific systems in place that made it easier for them to attend college, some found it quite stressful, some also felt that the support they received when attending college was from Traveller Organisations that they had been linked in with while participating on community employment programmes.

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[1] https://lit.ie/en-IE/Life-At-LIT/Admissions-Support/access-services/Contact-Us

Q. Was there anything you find difficult as a Traveller attending college?

Some involved found the cultural expectations of family and friends difficult for them, Traditionally Travellers did not attend third level and they were worried about what their families would think. Some males involved felt embarrassed when other Travellers saw them attending college. Assignments could prove to be difficult also with those living in caravans without proper facilities having no access to WIFI. These factors added to the extra stress and pressure.

Q. Have you any suggestions as to how Travellers can be supported or supported more when accessing and attending college?

Suggestions were as follows:

Information sessions from past students to primary and secondary schools.
College visits specifically for Travellers which TU Dublin have done and hopefully will continue to do so.
More awareness and support for Travellers around the CAO application and other access routes available to them.
Extra supports for Travellers after college around career guidance.

Q. Did you disclose that you were a member of the Traveller Community when you attended college and why?

Some of the Travellers involved did disclose but felt uncomfortable as they were asked a lot of questions, comments were made such as 'you don't look or sound like a Traveller' these types of comments made them feel the need to defend themselves by stating that 'not all Travellers look and sound the same'. Others did not disclose due to experiences of discrimination they had faced in previous courses they did so they did not want to face the same thing again while attending college.

7.   CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This research has firstly outlined the context of state policy on access and participation in higher education. It went on to outline the public sector human rights and equality duty of higher education institutions to assess, address and report on their role 'to promote equality, prevent discrimination and protect the human rights' of Traveller and Roma students and other under-represented groups in higher education. The research findings and discussion chapters provide the testimony of Traveller students (past and present) on their experiences in college in TU Dublin. These are the chapters deserving the most attention for TU Dublin to find a base from which to build for increased and improved access, participation and outcome for students from the Traveller and Roma communities. This chapter sets out some key conclusions / recommendations.

1   As a result of the information received from this small scale research project it is clear to see the value and importance of employing a member of the Traveller Community in the access office, having a Traveller on campus who can support and encourage other Travellers during their studies is an asset to any university.

2   Findings show that some Traveller students felt isolated and alone and would have benefited from someone from their community studying alongside them, that they would have felt more supported. This shows the importance of Travellers being supported and encouraged to apply to attend university and the value of Traveller group taster sessions and university open days for Travellers so that groups and family and friends can attend together and may take the next step on their education journey together.

3   The value of connections and supports from local Traveller organisations is vital for Travellers who are engaged with them who are beginning their journey and may not know the steps to take to apply for college, the process can be quite daunting and for Travellers who are early school leavers and may not know the access routes to apply for university they are being provided information and support through their local Traveller organisations. Without these organisations many Travellers would not have attended university as they would not have known where to start. TU Dublin has a strong connection with their local Traveller organisation Blanchardstown Traveller Development Group and students have been supported through this organisation to

access university. The fostering of relationships with local Traveller and Roma organisations and networks is crucial to engaging more Travellers and Roma in higher education.

4   Employment is crucial. Employment remains a significant barrier for Travellers and Roma. Even after achieving third level qualifications, to degree, masters and PhD levels, deep systemic racism and exclusion remains for Travellers and Roma seeking employment in the public and private sectors. A structure being put in place for employment opportunities and pathways for Traveller and Roma and other ethnic minorities following completion of college degrees would be beneficial for those who may not know where to go after completion or may be reluctant to apply for mainstream positions due to discrimination and isolation they may have experienced in the employment industry previously.

5   Many of those interviewed chose to hide their ethnic identity while attending college. This is a personal choice and one in which there are many factors involved in the reasons why they chose to do so. It is TU Dublin's responsibility to actively fulfil its public sector duty to make sure that Travellers feel welcome and included and their cultural identity celebrated within campus. Traveller cultural awareness training across the board for staff and students in TU Dublin is highly recommended and can give an insight into Traveller culture and identity as well as customs and traditions. Hiding ethnic identity is also a difficult personal decision and the public sector duty properly implemented could assist to create an environment in which this is no longer a choice that has to be made (refer also to recommendation 7 on TU Dublin's public sector duty.

6   Linked to recommendation 5 above, the visibility of aspects of Traveller culture (images, language, traditions and arts) and Roma culture on the university campus would contribute to greater diversity in the university. This begins with recognition of the Traveller and Roma and other minority ethnic communities in the university policies, practices, plans and reports. It not only builds a sense of diversity and welcome for the minority cultures but also raises greater awareness among the majority cultures in our universities. This ultimately builds a sense of belonging for Traveller and Roma students in college.

7   All public bodies in Ireland have a statutory obligation under the Public Sector Equality and Hunan Rights Duty to promote equality, prevent discrimination and protect the

human rights of their employees, customers, service users and everyone affected by their policies and plans. Chapter Three of this report explains the public sector duty and the obligations on TU Dublin and indeed all higher education institutions to comply with the duty. Whilst the initiatives undertaken by the university (outlined in chapter three) are very commendable and demonstrate a strong commitment to supporting Traveller and Roma access to higher education, compliance with the public sector duty requires explicit reference to the duty in the university's strategic plans and reporting framework. The initiatives outlined, Race Equity Strategy, Equality Statement and Strategic Plans can form part of the university's obligations to assess, address and report on fulfilling the university's public sector duty. Also, the public sector duty is a whole of university statutory obligation and not confined solely to the Equality Diversity and Inclusion function of the university. The Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission have developed useful templates (IHREC, 2022) which can assist the university with its compliance in relation to its public sector duty under the Act (Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014). In this regard. It is recommended the university governance and compliance function engage with the supports available from the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission.

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1. Interview Information Sheet

I am currently completing a research project funded by the IHREC entitled *'Action Research Project What works in supporting Traveller access and participation in higher education'.* The project is led by Blanchardstown Traveller Development Group (BTDG). TU Dublin (Blanchardstown Campus) is the partner organisation. The project is funded under the *IHREC Grants Scheme 2022-23 Theme 2 'Supporting compliance with the Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty' and strand 2 'locally-based civil society organisations/groups'.*

This interview is being undertaken for research purposes as outlined above. The interview will last no longer than 1 hour and questions may be provided to you in advance if you require this for preparation.

1   Anonymity

We wish to assure you the final report will ensure no research participant will be identified or identifiable, i.e. your interview responses will be anonymized (for example Interviewee 5). Place of work or employer institution will not be disclosed.

2   Consent to Audio-Recording

If it is ok with you we would like to record this interview. If at any stage you would like us to switch off the recording, feel free to do so and we will agree how to record that piece of content. We will send you the transcript for verification. Only some key quotes from the transcript will be included in the final research report.

3   Right to Withdraw

You may withdraw from the research project at any time without providing a reason.

4   Transcript Secure Storage and Access

The audio recording will be retained until the text transcript of the interview has been finalized at which point the audio recording will be erased and deleted. The transcript will be available/accessible to the research interviewee, the research interviewer, the partner organization representative only. The transcript will be retained for a period of 12 months in a password protected file at which point it will be deleted.

2. List of interview questions for each cohort of Interviewees
Questions to Students from the Traveller Community

1   *Can you identify barriers that you may have faced when trying to access college?*

2   *What if any specific supports are offered to Traveller students during their studies?*

3   *Have you any suggestions as to how Travellers can be supported or supported more when accessing and attending College?*

4   *Did you feel comfortable identifying as a Traveller in college or did you choose to keep it private and why?*

5   *Were there any systems in place that made it easier for you as a Traveller to attend college?*

6   *Was there anything you find difficult as a Traveller attending college?*

Questions to Access Officer

1. Could you tell us a bit about your role as (Role Title) Access Officer?

2. Why is it important to have Traveller Education Co-ordinators or Traveller Access Officers in universities? i.e. What difference does it make having staff members who are themselves from the Traveller or Roma communities in access roles and programmes as staff in universities/TU's ?

3. What added value comes from employing staff who have direct experience of being a Traveller coming through higher education?

4. How has your experience as a member of the Traveller community coming through higher education informed your work now as an Access Officer?

5. What are the current participation rates for Travellers accessing your university?

6. What are the past outcome rates for Travellers accessing your university?

7. Can you identify any barriers from your university that Travellers may face when trying to access your university?

8. What if any specific supports are offered to Traveller students during their studies?

9. Did you ever collect data in relation to numbers of Travellers / Roma registered in (name of Institution) in the past?

10. Do most Traveller / Roma students self-declare their ethnicity? If not what do you think prevents them from doing so?

11. What new activities have you introduced in access to encourage more Travellers to access college? e.g. open days, taster programmes.

12. Has the Access Office in (institution name anonymise) organized any specific training for staff of the university on cultural awareness of the Traveller community or anti-Traveller racism training?

13. Has the university hosted any culture days, festivals, e.g. Traveller Pride etc.?

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