

AONTAS

**Written Submission to the
Oireachtas Joint Committee
on Key Issues Affecting the
Traveller Community**



**Written Submission Made on
19th November 2019**

Organisation: AONTAS, the National Adult Learning Organisation

Name and Role in the organisation: Tara Farrell (Chairperson); Niamh O'Reilly (CEO); Benjamin Hendriksen (Advocacy Lead)

Postal address: AONTAS 2nd Floor, 83-87 Main Street, Ranelagh, Dublin 6, D06 E0H1

Email for communication regarding this submission: bhendriksen@aontas.com

Daytime telephone number: 01 406 8220

Web-address: www.aontas.com

Date of written submission: 19 November 2019

Submission sent to: aileen.fallon@oirechatas.ie and copied to jckitc@oireachtas.ie

Outline of submission:

- i. AONTAS thanks the Oireachtas Joint Committee on Key Issues Affecting the Traveller Community for the invitation to make a submission regarding school completion, and educational attainment, particularly at second and third level compared to the settled population.
- ii. As a membership organisation representing adult learners, adult learning practitioners, and institutions that provide educational opportunity and supports to adult learners, we hope that our submission is able to contextualise discussions about how the data and knowledge that already exists regarding Traveller access and participation in non-formal and formal education can be understood. We hope that the Joint Committee members and anyone else reading this submission takes away the important message that the education system cannot expect people to participate in education because something is deemed by the system as beneficial. Instead, if the system believes that a public service like education is of benefit to people and communities like the Traveller community, then the system must adapt to their needs and break down the barriers to their participation.

- iii. We also hope that our submission is read with an understanding and appreciation for the fact that within the Traveller community low participation rates in education start at a young age, continuing into adulthood. Research we reference is likely well known to members of the Joint Committee and speak to the systemic and decades long barriers to participation which result in these low participation rates. What is urgently needed is action to remedy these barriers. The problem it seems too often is not that we as a society do not know what actions to take, but rather that we are lacking in the commitment to target the necessary resources so that real support can be given and real change can occur.
- iv. The Recommendations made by AONTAS at the end of this submission are listed here for the Joint Committee's ease of reference:
 - a. Review the impact of cuts to Traveller education since 2008 with the goal of understanding and addressing the specific needs arising from the cuts.
 - b. Highlight positive role models and success stories of Travellers who have participated in education and are helping their community
 - c. Address non-education barriers to engagement in education like inadequate housing and hunger.
 - d. Support access by Travellers to accredited adult education courses.
 - e. Support community education financially and structurally as an equal part of the education system alongside further education and training, and third level education. Community education provides education opportunities close to the people and communities they serve. They provide opportunities in an inclusive and supportive environment and with opportunities that meet the needs and requirements of the community.
- v. AONTAS would like to take this space to thank our member organisation Exchange House Ireland: National Traveller Service for their time and expertise in the development of this submission.

Introduction to AONTAS, the National Adult Learning Organisation

- i. AONTAS is Ireland's National Adult Learning Organisation for adult and community education providers, and adult learners. It promotes the value and benefits of adult learning, and advocates on behalf of the adult and community education sector. Founded in 1969, it is an independent NGO, with 400 members nationwide.
- ii. In addition to promoting adult learning in Ireland, AONTAS is the national coordinating body for the European Agenda for Adult Learning (EAAL). The work of the EAAL is aimed at increasing participation in lifelong learning across the EU, enhancing policies and supports for adult learners, and gathering and disseminating European best practices.
- iii. As a membership organisation we provide a space for members to share experience, promote their work and advocate for the value of adult and community education.

Identifying the Correct Policy Question

- iv. Prior to reflecting on the core message of our submission which will be to discuss barriers to education and the role that community education and other recommended policies can have to overcome these barriers, we need to ensure that we are providing the correct policy solutions to the correct policy question.
- v. In the invitation to make a written submission and present to the Joint Committee on Key Issues Affecting the Traveller Community a proposal was made that submissions should look at the topic of education and the Traveller community in a way that includes discussion about:
 - i. Access to education and the adequacy of funding for Traveller specific education services
 - ii. Factors that affect the educational attainment of the Traveller community, including but not limited to, perceived stigma associated with being a Traveller and the discrimination of Travellers within the school system
 - iii. Barriers to accessing second and third level education
 - iv. Willingness of the Traveller community to engage with educational services and schools, and
 - v. Solutions to encourage the Traveller community to remain in school and continue on to third level education, including apprenticeships.

- vi. When considering these topic areas it is important to reflect on the fact that Government cannot solve a policy problem defined as ‘what can be done to make people in the Traveller community willing to engage or participate in education’. Instead we must recognise that the policy question we should be trying to solve is ‘What can and must the Government do to make non-formal and formal¹ education and lifelong learning a viable and meaningful experience and opportunity for the Traveller community?’ Policy analysts and policy makers must not fall into the policy trap of trying to problematize the actions of people from a deficit perspective. Instead we must ensure that we ask the correct policy question, which is ‘What can and must the Government do to make non-formal and formal education and lifelong learning a viable and meaningful experience and opportunity for the Traveller community?’
- vii. Given the asymmetry of the historic and current power structure between Government and members of the Traveller community, the onus is on the system to adapt and meet the needs of the Traveller community. This obligation to respond arises from the centuries of systematic oppression of the Traveller community. In order to respond to the needs of the Traveller community AONTAS takes the time to reflect on the findings and recommendations of other Government and Oireachtas reports from the past decades. We also propose recommendations that respond to the policy problem we have identified above, which is ‘What can and must the Government do to make non-formal and formal education and lifelong learning a viable and meaningful experience and opportunity for the Traveller community?’

Historic Policy Context:

- viii. Government policy for over twenty years has recognised the role adult education plays in addressing the educational needs of Travellers. As far back as 1995, *The Report of the Task Force on the Travelling Community* (Task Force Report) stated that the ‘values and ideals associated with progressive forms of adult education should be cultivated and the richness of the varied provision should be encouraged’.²

¹ Also known respectively as accredited or non-accredited education

² *Report of the Task Force on the Travelling Community*. Pp.43.

<https://www.lenus.ie/bitstream/handle/10147/560365/taskforcetravellingcommunity.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>. [Accessed 17/11/2019].

- ix. *Learning for Life: The White Paper on Adult Education*³, (White Paper) published almost 20 years ago in 2000 discusses the challenges and barriers facing adults including Travellers seeking education. The White Paper is a policy response aimed at addressing barriers by stating that equality and interculturalism should underpin all adult education policy initiatives. Furthermore, the 2005 *Report and Recommendations for a Traveller Education Strategy* highlights the Government's commitment to
- a. 'ensuring that Travellers receive a high quality, integrated education from early childhood to adult education that...will enable individuals to achieve their full potential and to participate fully as members of society, and contribute to Ireland's social, cultural and economic development'.⁴
- x. However, despite such commitments at policy level, between 2008 and 2013 spending on Traveller Education was cut by 86.6%⁵. These cuts include the following:
- The Visiting Teacher for Travellers Service (VTTS) was reduced by 100% (a loss of 42 posts)
 - Resource Teachers for Travellers (RTT) cut by 100%
 - In the area of adult education specifically, in 2012 all Senior Traveller Training Centres (STTCs) across the country were closed, with a view to mechanisms being put in place to support participation of Travellers in mainstream programmes.
- xi. These cuts were detrimental to the Traveller community, and, while some viewed the end of segregated provision within the STTCs as a positive development, there is no evidence that effective supports towards mainstreaming have been developed and put in place as replacement supports⁶.
- xii. It is within this historic policy context that we must understand the current challenges facing the Traveller community. It is within this policy context of decades of failing the Traveller community and not living up to our stated commitments that we must take action.

³ Department of Education and Science. *Learning for Life: The White Paper on Adult Education*. July 2000. https://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Policy-Reports/fe_aduled_wp.pdf. [Accessed 16/11/2019].

⁴ *Report and Recommendations for a Traveller Education Strategy*. pp. 67.

https://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Policy-Reports/traveller_ed_strat.pdf. pp.90. [Accessed 17/11/2019]

⁵ Brian Harvey. *Travelling with Austerity' Impacts of Cuts on Travellers, Traveller Projects and Services*. Pavee Point Traveller and Roma Centre. 2013.

⁶ Harmon, H. (2015). *Irish Traveller and Roma Children: A Response to Ireland's Consolidated Third and Fourth Report to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child*, Dublin: Pavee Point Traveller and Roma Centre.

Contemporary Policy Context: the 2017 ESRI Report *A Social Portrait of Travellers in Ireland* and the 2019 Joint Committee on Education and Skills Report on *Education inequality & disadvantage and Barriers to Education*

- xiii. Prior to delving into the barriers to participation in education which are faced by the Traveller community both as children and as adults, it is important that we understand the real outcomes of Travellers within the existing educational system.
- xiv. Two in-depth reports from 2017 and 2019 respectively have highlighted numerous facts and issues that affect the educational participation and attainment of Travellers within second level and third level education, as well as broader adult education. These two reports, one funded by the Department of Justice and Equality and the other written and published by the Oireachtas Joint Committee on Education and Skills are respectively the 2017 ESRI Report *A Social Portrait of Travellers in Ireland*⁷ and the 2019 *Joint Committee on Education and Skills Report on Education inequality & disadvantage and Barriers to Education*.⁸

2017 ESRI Report: *A Social Portrait of Travellers in Ireland*

- xv. The 2017 ESRI Report *A Social Portrait of Travellers in Ireland* was funded by the Department of Justice and Equality as part of a programme of research on equality. The study draws on a special analysis of Census 2011 to examine in detail the patterns of disadvantage experienced by Travellers in the areas of education, employment, housing and health. The findings on Traveller participation in education are enlightening for the discussion of the Joint Committee as they highlight the factual ground upon which this conversation must take place.
- xvi. Important facts presented in this report which are helpful for our understanding of Traveller participation in education come from the Executive Summary which is quoted in full here.
 - a. “Travellers are much less likely to have completed education to Leaving Certificate level: only 8 per cent have done so, compared to 73 per cent of non-Travellers. Only 1 per cent of Travellers aged 25–64 years have a college degree compared to 30 per cent of non-Travellers. Travellers are more likely to have left school at an early age, with 28 per cent of Travellers over 25 years having left before the age of 13, compared to only 1 per cent of non-

⁷ Dorothy Watson, Oona Kenny and Frances McGinnity. ESRI. *A Social Portrait of Travellers in Ireland*. 2017. <https://www.esri.ie/system/files?file=media/file-uploads/2017-01/RS56.pdf>. [Accessed 13/11/2019]

⁸ Joint Committee on Education and Skills. *Joint Committee on Education and Skills Report on Education inequality & disadvantage and Barriers to Education*. 2019. https://data.oireachtas.ie/ie/oireachtas/committee/dail/32/joint_committee_on_education_and_skills/report_s/2019/2019-06-05_report-on-education-inequality-disadvantage-and-barriers-to-education_en.pdf. [Accessed 13/11/2019]

Travellers. When we adjust for the fact that Travellers tend to be younger than non-Travellers (and younger adults tend to have higher levels of education), the 'education gap' becomes even larger.

- b. Among Travellers and among the general population, women and younger adults were more likely to complete second level education. However, the pattern by age differs between Travellers and non-Travellers so that the gap in terms of completing second level is larger in the younger age groups. Among those aged 55– 64 years, 97 per cent of Traveller and 49 per cent of non-Travellers left school without completing second level. Among those in the 25–34 age group, the figures are 91 per cent of Travellers and 14 per cent of non-Travellers. This suggests that Travellers have not benefitted as much as non-Travellers from the general improvement in levels of education since the 1960s. ”⁹

- xvii. The findings of the report regarding education had a direct connection to the report's findings on unemployment. To assess why there were differences in unemployment ESRI constructed a statistical model to evaluate how much of the non-employment of Travellers and non-Travellers was associated with low levels of education and with other characteristics such as gender, marital and family status, age group and region. The results suggested that education was very important. ESRI notes that the employment rate of non-Travellers is about six times higher than that of Travellers in the 2011 Census. However, if the two groups (Travellers and non-Travellers) are made similar in terms of education according to their statistical modelling and accounting for age group, gender, marital status, presence of children and region, the difference in employment rates drops to be just 1.9 times.
- xviii. As ESRI reported, this narrowed gap shows that when Travellers have the same educational opportunities there is a very substantial reduction in the employment gap, though the gap does remain. The existence of this gap in employment that results from a lack of education, and the remaining barriers for employment that remain even after accounting for education, are the result of societal, and structural barriers that face members of the Traveller community.
- xix. The remainder of the AONTAS submission focusses on what some of these barriers are and on policy options that are available to the Oireachtas and Government in order to work towards overcoming these barriers.

⁹ Dorothy Watson, Oona Kenny and Frances McGinnity. ESRI. *A Social Portrait of Travellers in Ireland*. 2017. <https://www.esri.ie/system/files?file=media/file-uploads/2017-01/RS56.pdf>. pp. 7-9 [Accessed 13/11/2019].

Joint Committee on Education and Skills Report on Education Inequality & Disadvantage and Barriers to Education

- xx. In 2019 the Joint Committee on Education and Skills released their comprehensive *Report on Education Inequality & Disadvantage and Barriers to Education*.¹⁰ In this report the Joint Committee highlights barriers to education faced by adult learners as they work to gain access to educational opportunities. Examples of these barriers which have a particular impact on adult learners generally include the financial cost of full-time study, childcare, geography, public transport and lack of institutional access. The report also makes several conclusions about systemic barriers to education facing members of the Traveller community. Summaries of these conclusions from the report are referenced here for your consideration.

Conclusion 4 – Meritocracy is not real

- xxi. The report states that the education system as it currently stands is unfair and unequal; and the consequences of this are stark especially when considering specific groups including the Traveller community. The current approach that drives policy is an equality of opportunity approach, whereby as a society we support a competitive approach to education, believing that merit should be rewarded. The report recognised that the current structure, where there is an unequal distribution of income and wealth, is being legitimised through the ideologies of meritocracy, and is actively reproducing inequalities in access to education. The Committee concluded that equalising opportunity is an inadequate policy solution and has not worked.

Conclusion 5 – Policy Conflict

- xxii. Disadvantage exists and occurs both horizontally, whereby policies and practices negatively impact upon each other and vertically, whereby broad structures and policies influence the systems of schools and universities, which interact with individual capacities, including finances and family status. The example raised about Travellers highlights how the policies of assimilation interacted with the cultural norms of the Traveller community, pushing them further away from education.

¹⁰ Joint Committee on Education and Skills. *Joint Committee on Education and Skills Report on Education inequality & disadvantage and Barriers to Education*. 2019.
https://data.oireachtas.ie/ie/oireachtas/committee/dail/32/joint_committee_on_education_and_skills/report_s/2019/2019-06-05_report-on-education-inequality-disadvantage-and-barriers-to-education_en.pdf.
[Accessed 13/11/2019]

- xxiii. From these and other conclusions about the broader educational system the Joint Committee made a series of recommendations. Recommendations specifically relating to the Traveller community included:
- a. The State recognising the harm that it has inflicted upon the Traveller community through historical policies of assimilation is recognised;
 - b. That consideration be given to how the education system is inclusive and culturally respectful to all, especially Irish Travellers and ethnic minorities;
 - c. That Government bodies should work with the Traveller community to address the lack of engagement of male Travellers in education. In developing the strategy, the negative legacy of educational policies and practices in Ireland must be acknowledged and addressed;
 - d. That Traveller organisations should be resourced to develop a national network committed to supporting Traveller men in engaging in culturally appropriate education initiatives.
- xxiv. While for the purpose of brevity AONTAS have only highlighted the conclusions and recommendations noted in the Joint Committee's report that specifically reference the Traveller community, the wider recommendations of the report should be read as a blue print for the actions that AONTAS and our members believe should be implemented in order to create a more just and equitable education and lifelong learning system for all people in Ireland in addition to the specific impact that implementation of the recommendations would have on the Traveller community.

Policy Options for breaking down Barriers to Education

- xxv. The primary purpose of our submission to the Joint Committee on Key Issues Affecting the Traveller Community is to contextualise discussions about how the data and knowledge that already exists regarding Traveller access and participation in non-formal and formal education can be understood and acted on. Through review of the referenced reports everyone should be able to agree that the evidence highlighting the policy problems for increasing Traveller participation in education, and ultimately the broader Irish community already exists.
- xxvi. However in addition to these Joint Committee recommendations, AONTAS has several other policy options that we believe would be beneficial to breaking down the barriers to Traveller participation in education.

Review the impact of cuts to Traveller education since 2008 with the goal of understanding and addressing the specific needs arising from the cuts

As stated earlier, between 2008 and 2013 spending on Traveller education was cut by 86.6%¹¹. These cuts include:

- The Visiting Teacher for Travellers Service (VTTS) was reduced by 100% (a loss of 42 posts)
- Resource Teachers for Travellers (RTT) cut by 100%
- In the area of adult education specifically, in 2012 all Senior Traveller Training Centres (STTCs) across the country were closed, with a view to mechanisms being put in place to support participation of Travellers in mainstream programmes.

These cuts were detrimental for Traveller education and no effort has ever been made to restore funding.¹²

Additionally, other cuts to social and training supports for citizens have further impacts on vulnerable populations. An example of this type of cut is the recent cut to the €31.80 Rehabilitative Training Allowance over the summer of 2019. Cuts to services like this which provide a direct payment to learners chip away at the ability of adults to effectively engage in education according to their own needs and desires. The reinstatement of the Rehabilitative Training Allowance which AONTAS and partner organisations advocated for over the summer of 2019 would be a significant positive step people returning to learning.

Highlight positive role models and success stories of Travellers who have participated in education and are helping their community

- xxvii. One of the primary ways that adults in Ireland hear about education opportunities is through word of mouth. In 2017 AONTAS found that of the 254 learners engaged with through the National Further Education and Training Learner Forum, 59% heard about their course through word-of-mouth.¹³ Anecdotally from AONTAS membership we know that word-of-mouth is an even more important form of communication amongst the Traveller community.
- xxviii. With this point in mind it is important that Government and stakeholders involved in the provision of non-state education for Travellers highlight positive success stories of people returning to education. More importantly it is important that education

¹¹ Brian Harvey. *Travelling with Austerity' Impacts of Cuts on Travellers, Traveller Projects and Services*. Pavee Point Traveller and Roma Centre. 2013.

¹² Hilary Harmon. *Irish Traveller and Roma Children: A Response to Ireland's Consolidated Third and Fourth Report to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child*. 2015. <https://www.paveepoint.ie/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/Pavee-Point-Shadow-Report-for-UNCRC-on-Traveller-and-Roma-Children1.pdf>.

¹³ AONTAS. *National Further Education and Training (FET) Learner Forum Advisory Report – 2017*. https://www.aontas.com/48390-AONTAS%20NALF%20Policy%20Report_August_2019.pdf. pp.19. [Accessed 14 November, 2019].

institutions, whether not-for-profit providers of community education, or state providers, work to provide an engaging, open, welcoming, and supportive environment, as the reputation of these institutions will be known to members of the Traveller community thinking about returning to education. Therefore providing a positive experience for one person can lead to the engagement of several more.

Non-education barriers to engagement in education

- xxix. For many Travellers, the ability to engage in education is negatively impacted by poor living conditions. Engaging in education for children and adults requires adequate sleep, nutrition, warmth, and facilities that allow for homework and study.
- xxx. A report commissioned by Pavee Point in 2013, by independent consultant Brian Harvey, examined the impact of austerity on government funding of Traveller infrastructure. Harvey finds that government expenditure on Traveller accommodation reduced by 85% in the period following the economic crisis in 2008. This spending reduction was further complicated by the fact that there was a 36% underspend across the Traveller accommodation programme.¹⁴
- xxxi. To address these non-education barriers to education AONTAS welcomes the focus on accommodation in the *National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy 2017-2024*, and recommends that all adult education policy includes plans to address barriers to participation in education such as inadequate accommodation.

Supporting access by Travellers to accredited adult education courses

- xxxii. Many community education organisations are currently quality assured as providers of courses leading to QQI awards. Since its inception in 2007 the AONTAS Community Education Network (CEN) has worked closely with such organisations, including Exchange House: National Traveller Service, supporting them in meeting their quality assurance obligations and developing their practice through continuous professional development. We recommend as part of our broader recommendation regarding community education that supports are provided for accredited community education learning from providers across the country.
- xxxiii. In addition to ensuring access to accredited adult and community education, AONTAS also welcomes the commitment in the current *National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy 2017 – 2021* for the development of an accessible and inclusive model of Recognition of Prior Learning to support the accreditation and employment of Travellers and Roma. We look forward to the work of the Department of Education and Skills to achieve this aim and will do what we can to support its implementation.

¹⁴ Brian Harvey. *Travelling with Austerity' Impacts of Cuts on Travellers, Traveller Projects and Services*. Pavee Point Traveller and Roma Centre. 2013.

Community Education

- xxxiv. Our final recommendation for the Joint Committee, which is highlighted in the 2019 Joint Committee on Education and Skills' barriers to education report, and the *Report and Recommendations for a Traveller Education Strategy* is to support community education both through increased funding, and also through support that is given to community education to achieve parity of esteem with other sectors in the formal education system.¹⁵
- xxxv. As background information for members of the Joint Committee who may be unfamiliar with community education, community education is adult learning which takes place in local community settings across Ireland. It is learner-centred and responds to the needs of the local community. The holistic, non-threatening and supportive environment in which community education takes place has the effect of increasing the engagement of socially excluded people and groups like members of the Traveller community who have been excluded from wider society and who have had previous negative experiences of the formal education system. Adult learners who participate in community education include but are not limited to people living in areas with high levels of social deprivation, Travellers, migrants and people affected by homelessness and high and/or persistent unemployment. People who identify or are identified with these groups may not have the confidence, or social or financial supports needed to access formal adult education opportunities in local institutions. Community education acts for them as a first step back to education where they receive the wrap-around supports like childcare that allow them to participate fully in their learning journey. Community education is, by its nature, open to all and is available for members of the Travelling community. For example, community education health-care and child-care courses are particularly popular with Traveller women, as are courses that deal with personal development and confidence-building.

¹⁵ Joint Committee on Education and Skills. *Joint Committee on Education and Skills Report on Education inequality & disadvantage and Barriers to Education*. 2019. https://data.oireachtas.ie/ie/oireachtas/committee/dail/32/joint_committee_on_education_and_skills/report_s/2019/2019-06-05_report-on-education-inequality-disadvantage-and-barriers-to-education_en.pdf. pp. 25. [Accessed 13/11/2019]

- xxxvi. Initiatives such as the Traveller Primary Health Care Programme¹⁶ took a community development approach to adult education and training. The principles underpinning community development and community education are very closely aligned, with each committed to collective action, capacity building, equality, and interculturalism. In light of this AONTAS wholeheartedly welcomes the commitment in the *National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy 2017 – 2021* to ‘continue to support and resource Traveller organisations at national and local level, underpinned by community development principles’. The commitment to continued support and funding for local Traveller Community Development Projects is most welcome and is a progressive move towards addressing the many cuts over the past eleven years.
- xxxvii. The community and voluntary sector has, over generations, built up considerable expertise in supporting Traveller engagement in adult education, in an inclusive, integrated manner. This is acknowledged in the White Paper on Adult Education, which states on page 51 that:
- a. ‘...the work of non-governmental organisations involved ...with Travellers already constitutes a significant reservoir of expertise and progressive thinking which could be of great benefit to educational planners in shaping their agendas for an inter-cultural future’.
- xxxviii. The Task Force Report reiterates these points recommending that ‘adult education policy should draw on the experience and insights of Traveller organisations involved in the provision of adult education’. This point is further reinforced in the Report and Recommendations for a Traveller Education Strategy¹⁷ which states that ‘Traveller organisations and other community development organisations have played an important role as providers of innovative learning opportunities specifically for Travellers and in outreach to the community’. This report recommends that ‘Traveller organisations should continue to be involved in the development and provision of innovative community education initiatives’.
- xxxix. With the positive benefits of community education as a policy tool for reaching marginalised people and communities noted we must highlight that the community and voluntary sector was disproportionately impacted by cuts following the economic crash in 2008. This has, over the past eleven years limited the capacity of community education to respond effectively to the needs of marginalised communities such as Travellers. Therefore we ask the Joint Committee to support the recommendation of the

¹⁶ Primary Health Care for Travellers Project. <https://www.paveepoint.ie/project/primary-health-care-for-travellers-project/>. [Accessed 17/11/2019].

¹⁷ Report and Recommendations for a Traveller Education Strategy. https://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Policy-Reports/traveller_ed_strat.pdf. [Accessed 17/11/2019].

Joint Committee on Education and Skills' 2019 *Report on Education inequality & disadvantage and Barriers to Education* to support community education both through increased funding, and also through support that is given to community education to achieve parity of esteem with other sectors in the formal education system.

Summary of Recommendations

Listed here is a summary of the recommendations made in this submission to the Joint Committee on Key Issues Affecting the Traveller Community.

- xl. Review the impact of cuts to Traveller education since 2008 with the goal of understanding and addressing the specific needs arising from the cuts.
- xli. Highlight positive role models and success stories of Travellers who have participated in education and are helping their community
- xlii. Address non-education barriers to engagement in education like inadequate housing and hunger.
- xliii. Support access by Travellers to accredited adult education courses.
- xliv. Support community education financially and structurally as an equal part of the education system alongside further education and training, and third level education. Community education provides education opportunities close to the people and communities they serve. They provide opportunities in an inclusive and supportive environment and with opportunities that meet the needs and requirements of the community.

Conclusion

- xliv. The existing barriers and inequities in access to education for Travellers over generations have been well documented. We hope that we have met our goal of contextualising the conversation that needs to take place about how Government can remove existing barriers, and create a more equal education system. AONTAS has welcomed the opportunity to contribute to this Joint Committee on Key Issues Affecting the Traveller Community and outline recommendations that we believe will improve access to education for members of the Traveller community, in particular our recommendation for supporting community education.
- xlvi. Finally, as the Joint Committee continues its work and develops recommendations for improving access and participation by Travellers in education, we must remember that it is the Government's responsibility to reach out and ensure the education system meets the needs of current and potential learners. It is not learners' responsibility to bend to existing offerings and services within the education system which might not be appropriate to their needs or desired learning outcomes.

AONTAS
2nd Floor, 83-87 Main Street,
Ranelagh, Dublin 6
www.aontas.com
01 406 8220

Company Registration Number: 80958
Registered Charity Number: 6719

