



EXCHANGE HOUSE

National Travellers Service



ANNUAL REVIEW 2008/2009

Chairperson's report

On behalf of Exchange House National Travellers Service I would like to thank all of our funders and supporters for their continued support, commitment and dedication to making the lives of Traveller families better. In particular I would like to give a special thanks to the Christian Brothers. For the last five years the Christian Brothers have provided Exchange House with a home for our services. Our location in the heart of the city centre has allowed us to make great strides, in particular in furthering our educational support services. We could not continue without the vital funding support; a special thanks to the HSE, the City of Dublin Youth Service Board, South Inner City Dublin Drug Task Force, FÁS, City of Dublin VEC, Department of Education and Science, School Completion, for their continued commitment to Traveller families and individuals in Ireland.



Family Support Service

Inadequate accommodation is a major contributing factor to the poor health among many service users of Exchange House. This is often compounded by a lack of understanding among providers of mainstream services of the difficulties faced by Travellers. The last two years saw us expanding our domestic violence and prison work as well as our addiction services. As funding has decreased for everyone and many programmes have stopped providing services our referrals have almost doubled which has kept our front line staff stretched to the maximum. Clients experiencing addiction issues and who are at risk of homelessness are being supported and helped to get access to accommodation and addiction treatment.

Education Service

We have broken some new ground with the Exchange House National Educational Achievement Award. Exchange House is proud to be leading the

way in recognising and acknowledging the educational achievements of Travellers in Ireland. The Education Award is in celebration and recognition of the educational achievements of Travellers around the country. Mostly these are young people who have broken new ground for themselves and their families. Exchange House seeks to influence and promote young people staying in school and to communicate to Travellers that education is the key to their future and that of the Traveller community.

Youth Service

Our youth service has sought to address the needs of young Travellers who are living on the streets. These young people are extremely vulnerable and through our central location and informal contacts we have been able to assist in improving their welfare and preventing them from being attracted to problematic social or criminal activities.

We continue to expand our Stay In School Programme to more schools in our catchment area to encourage young Travellers to stay in school.

Going National

Exchange House has nearly 30 years experience in providing face to face, front line services to some of the most marginalised members of the Traveller community. We are happy to assist other organisations which are committed to improving the lives of Travellers. We are committed as an organisation to continue to re-evaluate and adapt our front line services as the changing needs of our clients emerge.

Pat Bennett

Chairperson

Director's report

I am grateful to everyone that has supported Exchange House and made our successes and achievements possible. In particular the kindness, generosity, commitment and support from the Christian Brothers to Exchange House and vulnerable Traveller families in crisis by providing us with an ideal space in the centre of our catchment areas that to our clients is deeply appreciated.

Heydi Foster
Director

We are extremely proud that Exchange House has recently expanded to provide a national service through offering various Traveller specific training programmes, as well as provision of expertise and partnership with other organisations providing services in Ireland. Meanwhile our core front line day to day services for Travellers across Dublin continue to be in high demand.

The Family Support Team, on a daily basis, work with Traveller families to address the chronic issue of poverty and sub-standard living conditions, and work with people to tackle the challenges they face in bringing up children and organising their lives. Traveller families forced to live in poverty is a violation of their human rights. We keep on working with statutory and non-statutory organisations for a more systematic approach in dealing with the diverse needs of our clients.

2008 and 2009 saw a huge spike in the number of Travellers experiencing addiction and homeless issues. We continue to be a resource to Travellers made homeless due to their addiction, as well as women experiencing domestic violence.

Our Education Service provides high quality learner centred education programmes which acknowledge and build on existing strengths and skills of adult learners. Opportunities are provided in adult basic education, ensuring progression routes to further education & training and support in accessing third level education, training and employment.

In 2008 we launched the National Educational Achievement Awards Ceremony. The focus of the awards is to celebrate the achievements of Travellers of all ages from across the island who have taken their Leaving Certificate, Junior Certificate, A Level or O Level examinations. The award was created with the intention of highlighting the educational success and achievements of Travellers who are in education and to create a positive impact in the wider community.

School retention levels among the Traveller community, while improving, still fall far behind their



peers in the settled community. The issues continue to be complex, and require a range of strategic and targeted responses. Our After-Schools Programme has demonstrated that when provided with a culturally appropriate intervention and in partnership with their school, Traveller children enjoy the benefits of innovative learning experiences and improve their attendance. We continue to draw the lessons from this success to inform mainstream provision as to the gaps that still exist. The success of our Men's group gives us hope to engage more men in dealing with issues that arise onsite i.e. drug addiction, accommodation and domestic violence. We also continue to expand on our Educational Away Programme and to provide appropriate programmes to target a specific group of young people at risk. The Jeep Project is one model of best practice which could be replicated in other areas as it has allowed us to engage and meet the needs of young Travellers at risk of drugs and homelessness.

The needs of the Traveller community continue to be extremely complex in line with the changes in Irish society as a whole. Exchange House remains in close contact with the service users through our front-line staff to ensure that we continue to address their needs.

Family Support Service

The Family Support Service provided by Exchange House is the largest service for Travellers in the country. The service's goal is to provide a comprehensive multidisciplinary holistic approach to vulnerable Travellers and to empower them to make decisions and act independently. Service provision is multi-disciplinary encompassing social workers and family support workers (funded by the HSE) and addiction workers (funded by the Local Drugs Task Force).

The Family Support Team operates a Duty System (drop-in service) which runs daily. All age groups are catered for and the service is accessed equally by both men and women. There is no waiting list and referrals are seen within 48 hours. Referrals are received from schools, HSE Child Protection, hospitals, CWO, PHN, Probation services, Irish prisons, voluntary organisations, local authorities, youth agencies as well as self referrals. The team also provides a phone information service to clients and service providers.

A holistic response is delivered to clients in terms of prevention, crisis intervention and community development. The main issues addressed with clients are: Child Protection, addiction, mental health, suicide intervention, physical health, child care, social welfare, legal, Domestic Violence, sexual abuse, institutional abuse and accommodation. Our clients often present with complex and diverse issues whereby cases may need the involvement of more than one worker. A Family Support Worker, a Social Worker and an Addiction Worker may be required to support the client in a holistic way (i.e. three or two workers working with one client at a time).

Home visits/Outreach

Family support staff are rostered both on and off-site to meet client needs. Off-site visits encompass private rented accommodation, council accommodation, halting sites (official and unofficial), hostels, transitional accommodation, homeless agency accommodation, hospitals, schools, crèches, HSE Social Work offices, courts, Garda stations, local authority offices, drug treatment centres, social welfare offices, residential centres or any other venue that the client chooses and deems safe to meet.

Domestic Violence Service

The service provides information on options, counselling, safety plans, court accompaniment, risk assessments, assisting clients to access legal routes and providing intensive practical and

emotional support when a person is in an abusive relationship or when they decide to leave that relationship.

A Domestic Violence Training pack and a DVD have been produced by the Family Support Team in conjunction with the Education and Youth departments. These will be used for training of service users and service providers.

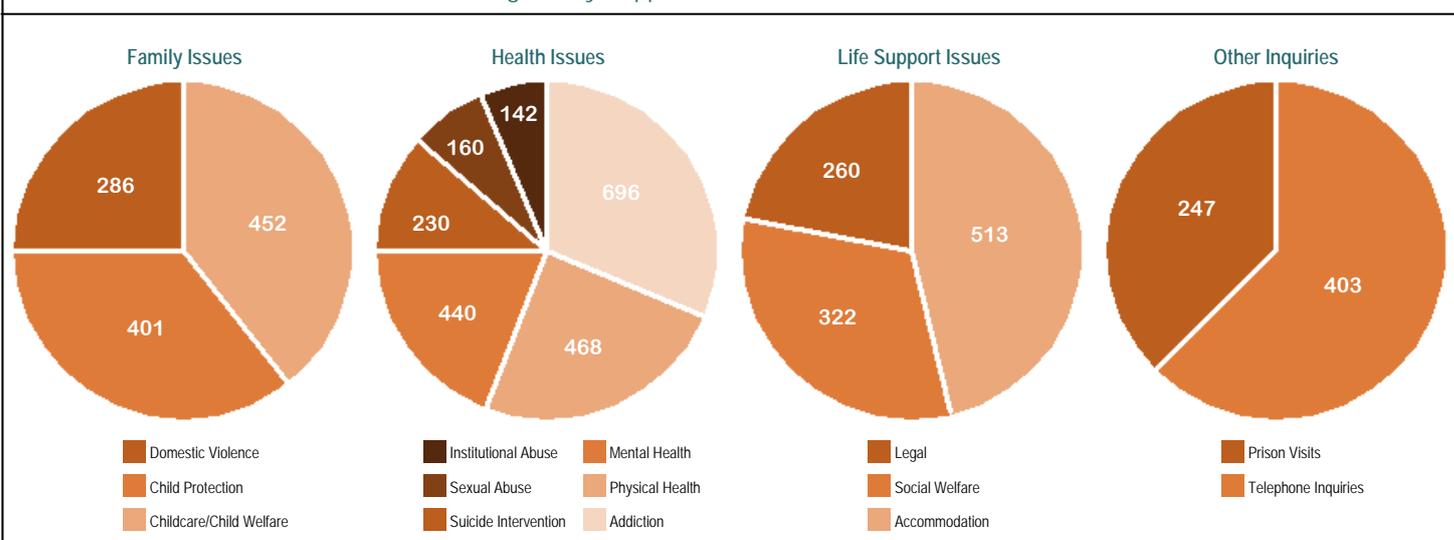
The family support team (social worker and family support worker) facilitates a Domestic Violence Support Clinic at Rathmines Women's Refuge every Tuesday. This was initially piloted at Rathmines Women's Refuge for twelve months and was positively evaluated. Clients who are supported at the Refuge are followed up after leaving.

Addiction Service

Exchange House Addiction Service continues to address problem drug use in line with the National Drug Strategy. Exchange House as an organisation works from a holistic multi-disciplinary approach and the Addiction Service in particular work from a bio-psych-social perspective and this complements the work with clients. In cases where clients are stable and ready to pursue education or gain access to the workforce they are referred to the Community Employment Scheme or the Local Training Initiative in the Education Department at Exchange House. The Youth Service is always open to working with

In 2008 and 2009 the
Family Support
Service's case load was
382 and duty (drop-in)
cases reached **334**.

The number of individuals or families accessing Family Support Services in 2008 & 2009



client's children or siblings requiring support. Education, Awareness and Prevention programmes continue to be top priority for this service. There has been an increased awareness of drug and alcohol issues leading to harm reduction, stabilisation and an overall reduction in addiction rates in relation to the clients we work with.

'Out of Homelessness' Project

The programme has been running since March 2009. The aim of the project is to:

- empower Travellers affected by addiction and homelessness
- assist them through various ways to address their addiction
- assist them to get out of the circle of homelessness

The services offered include: assisting clients in accessing and sustaining their accommodation. Assistance is provided in times of crisis by advocating on behalf of clients and/ or linking them with appropriate resources. Clients are also offered practical as well as emotional support. There has been an increase in numbers of clients obtaining and sustaining long term accommodation. This project was funded by POBAL under the Dormant Accounts funding.

AA

AA meetings have commenced in Exchange House and are held every Monday at 6pm. The meetings are open to Travellers and non-Travellers. This has been welcomed by clients and their families and attendance has been good. The purpose of the meetings being held in Exchange House is to help

break barriers that Travellers who are affected by addiction are faced with.

Prison Work

The Family Support Team continues to offer a clinic every Friday to the Dochas Women's Prison. This is facilitated by a social worker and an addiction worker. Outreach service is also being offered by the team in Mountjoy, Dochas, Wheatfield, St Patrick's Juvenile Prison and Cloverhill.

The team also works in conjunction with Probation Officers and the Renew Project to develop pre-release planning, counseling, suicide prevention and intervention, harm reduction and education, restoring family relations and linking prisoners with relevant services. One of the main outcomes is reduction in the rate of recidivism.

Parents Plus Programme

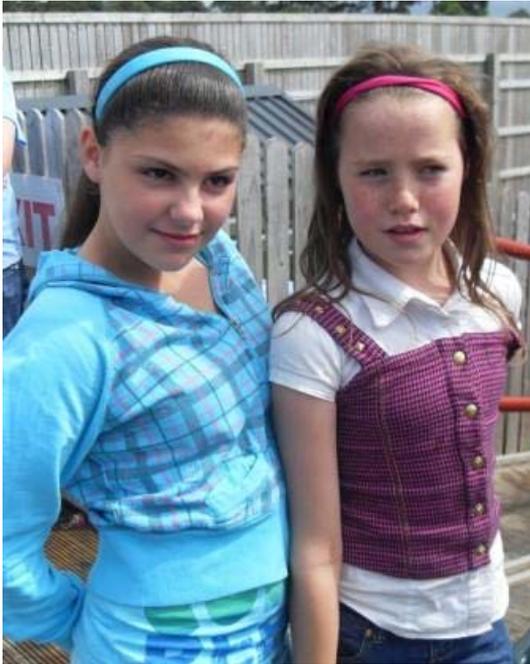
The Parents Plus training was facilitated by the Family Support Team for Traveller participation in the Education Department, Local Training Initiative. Three programmes were also run for Traveller women in Mountjoy prison. Individually tailored programmes are also offered to individual clients in their homes. This has led to increased awareness and improved parenting skills among parents who have engaged in the programme.

Student Placement

The Family Support Team has a good relationship with UCD, Trinity College, Carlow IT, NUI Mynooth as well as a number of high schools in Co. Dublin and Co. Louth. Social Work, Social Care, Addiction Studies and Transition Year Work Experience were coordinated by the Family Support Team.

Youth Service

Exchange House Traveller Youth Service is the main provider of Youth Services to the Traveller Community in the greater Dublin area. We provide a service to 200-250 young people in our catchment area. During 2008/9, the Traveller Youth Service provided a range of activities designed to give young people positive opportunities to support their social and personal education. The main focus of these programmes was to enhance their personal educational and community development skills.



The Youth Service successfully rolled out the Stay in Schools Programme to Ballymun, Ballyfermot and Clondalkin in partnership with the local schools and the local visiting teachers. During the past two years the young people we work with have become actively involved in Comhairle na nÓg resulting in one young person being elected to Dáil na nÓg. We have also started a young men's history project and we ran a Drugs Awareness Programme for young women. These programmes were delivered alongside our core Youth Service Programmes.

Throughout 2008/9, the Youth Service has successfully targeted and worked with the most marginalised and disadvantage young people in our catchment area. We have provided core Youth Service programmes as well as specialised structured programmes to meet the needs of these young people. We will continue to develop programmes which will enable the young people to take greater control of

their own lives and hopefully have a more positive outlook to society.

After Schools

The Youth Service operates two after-schools programmes for 6-16 year olds in Labre Park and 5-16 year olds in St. Oliver's Park, providing a comprehensive programme of educational assistance to 50 young people. Homework assistance, literacy support and computer skills are balanced with personal developmental activities such as arts and crafts, music and dance as well as a summer programme. In providing these programmes the after schools have improved relationships with local schools and supported parents in taking a more active part in their children's education. Both programmes have been successful in transfer rates from primary to secondary level education. Coordinators and their staff aim to encourage school attendance and to promote a positive attitude to education. Building on the previous success of the After Schools we have employed two new members of staff which will add to and support the work we do.

Educational Away Programmes

Over the past two years, the Youth Service has



worked with specific target groups of young people who have taken part in a number of different Educational Away Trips. These groups have been made up of different gender, ages, and backgrounds. The Educational Away Programmes took place in Kilkenny, Poland, Mayo and Wicklow. These programmes involved the team developing a positive and working relationship with 35-45 young people with specific needs in order to provide them with a space to express themselves in a positive and non-judgemental environment.

Stay-In-School Programme

Here in Exchange House we believe in the value and importance of education. Currently Exchange House Supports and facilitates 60 young people in the education system. We are currently working in 5 different schools in our catchment area, both primary and secondary levels. The hope for this programme is to run it in all schools in our catchment areas. The programme has been successful with retention in schools rising.

Our stay in school Programme is running annually since 2006. The aim of the stay in school Programme is to

- Encourage and maintain high attendance in



school

- The transition from primary to secondary level
- Completion of Junior and Leaving Certificate.

Our programme is run by the youth workers in conjunction with the schools, parents and our after schools programme. It is monitored closely and regular meetings and informal discussions are held between the youth workers and appropriate people in the schools. It is a year round programme with the young people participating in our mainstream programmes throughout the summer too. Since its huge success in 2006 our programme has

continued to spread to more schools every year. We hope to continue to spread this programme, encourage and support the young people we work with and deliver results year after year.

Our young people are rewarded and praised according to attendance and are recognised and awarded through our yearly National Education Achievements Awards.



Education Service

Exchange House Education Department provides a service which is grounded in excellence. We provided adult Travellers with a range of educational opportunities and provided progression routes to further education, training and employment. Education and training help to ensure equal access for Travellers in all aspects of Irish life. We have developed a department where Travellers can reach their full potential.

Each person is treated as an individual and their learning tailored to suit them, taking into account their knowledge, skills and experience, whether they wanted to learn to read and write, access third level education or gain employment.

Adult Basic Education

We continued to develop and run the one to one and group literacy service for people who were not engaged in any other programmes and who need to develop their skills in the areas of reading, writing, spelling and Numeracy. We run this programme with the continuing support of the City of Dublin VEC.

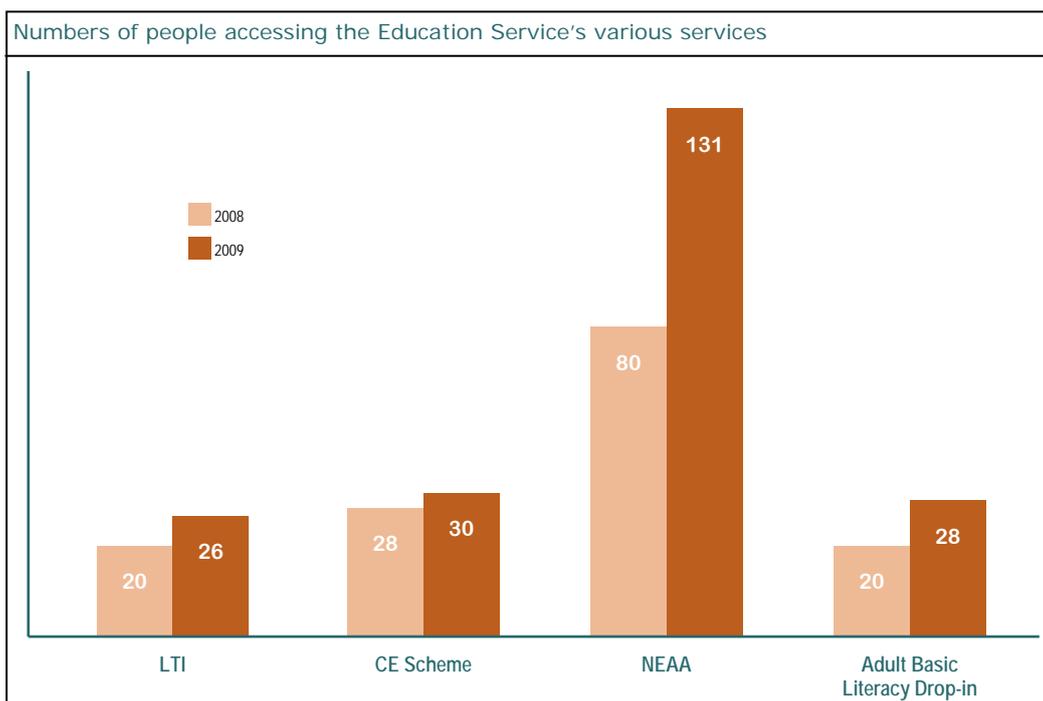
FÁS Local Training Initiative (LTI)

The LTI is a part-time training programme offering community and adult basic education. There are 17 participants on the training programme, of mixed gender, age and formal education levels. The LTI was restarted in February 2009. The core modules provided in 2009 were FETAC accredited (Levels 1 - 4) and covered Communications, Mathematics, Computer Literacy, Craft, Personal Effectiveness and Art and Design. Other courses such as health,

development education, job seeking skills and many more were also available. The training programme is learner directed, which means that participants have a strong say in what modules the group work on. The aim of the training programme is to provide participants with the education and skills to progress onto further education or into employment. The Local Training Initiative now runs from September to June.

FÁS Community Employment

The CE Scheme offered 18 participants an opportunity to engage in useful work within their communities on a part-time temporary, fixed-term basis. Exchange House Education Services worked to ensure that CE participants had the opportunity to gain skills that will assist them in entering the job market or return to education. This was achieved by offering training in the core areas of





FETAC

Communications, Maths, Personal Effectiveness, IT as well as various other optional modules. All of our core modules were FETAC accredited as are many of the optional ones. The Exchange House CE scheme was made up of men and women from the Traveller community who are very diverse in terms of age and skill levels. In 2008/09 the gender balance on the scheme was 50% men/women.

Community Employment is made up of two major parts, training and work. In terms of work, the CE participants were involved in Family Support projects, Administration Support, The National Educational Achievement Award, News Travels newsletter, EU projects, Intercultural Presentations and Research for various other projects.

The Education Services worked on the application for FETAC Quality Assurance during 2008/9. The application was sent in 2009 and we were subsequently successful.

National Educational Achievement Award

The Exchange House National Educational

Achievement Award was presented to Travellers, from the 32 counties of Ireland, who had recently completed the Junior Certificate, GCSE, Leaving Certificate or A Level examinations, in recognition of the hard work and commitment shown by the recipients in reaching their goals. The Award was launched in 2008.

The Exchange House National Educational Achievement Award is a celebration of the success of the recipients providing a chance to congratulate people on a job well done. The Award highlights role models for other Travellers who may be considering formal education and is proactive in promoting the value of formal education.

Further Education Information Service

The Education Service in Exchange House operated a Further Education Information Service offering one to one information to adult learners nationally.

Training Courses

Exchange House National Travellers Service offers a range of training courses for professionals who provide services to the Traveller community.

The courses have been designed by our experienced staff as a response to research that Exchange House and others have carried out, expertise gained from our clients, and requests from various statutory and voluntary bodies.

Training courses are available at our centrally located training rooms in Dublin city and at centres nationwide. If you require further information about our training events or if you would like to request training for your organisation, please contact us.

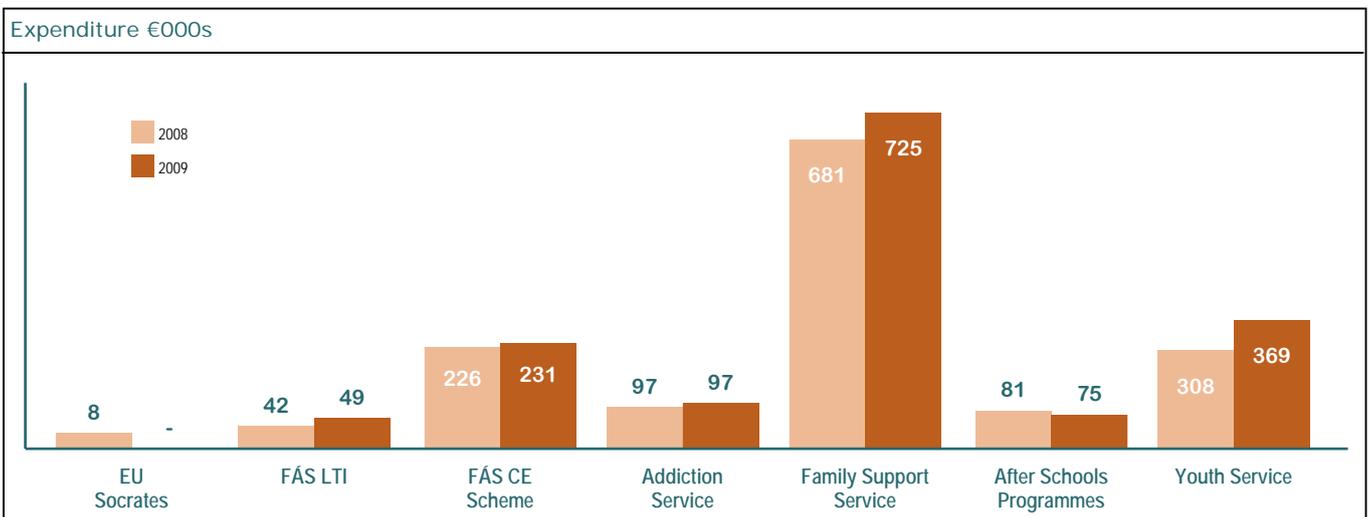
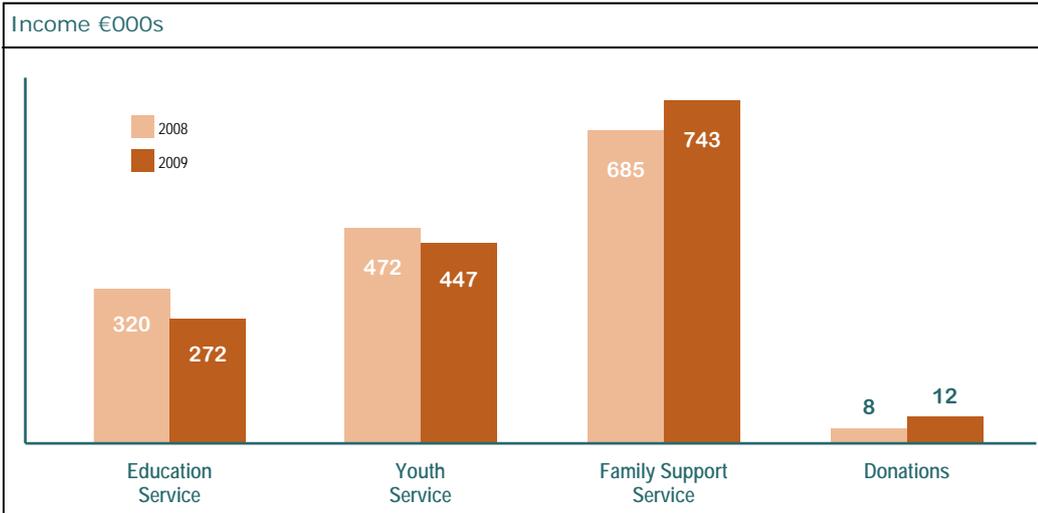
Introduction to the Traveller Community

This presentation was designed in response to enquiries Exchange House has had over the years from individuals, institutions and organisations that work with, or provide services to, members of the Traveller community. The aims of the presentation are to give people an insight into the Traveller community, which may lead to understanding of the issues that are important to Travellers. The programme is based on knowledge of the Traveller community gathered from years of experience providing face to face services to our clients. The Education Service developed and expanded the presentation in 2008. The presentation also deals with the issues faced by the Traveller community such as Accommodation, Health, Education and Discrimination, areas in which Exchange House works on a daily basis, with and on behalf of clients.

Future courses

Exchange House is developing other training courses for delivery to a range service providers and social work students on Best Practice when working with Travellers including family support, domestic violence and addiction. This service is provided at national level. We are happy to work in partnership with service providers across the country to share our knowledge and expertise in working effectively with Travellers.

Income and Expenditure





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