

EXCHANGE HOUSE

National Travellers Service



ANNUAL REVIEW 2010

Chairperson's report



As Chairperson of Exchange House it is my privilege to present the Annual Report for 2010.

It is clear from the Directors report that 2010 was a hugely important year in the development of the organisation and the services and supports it provides. Our challenge now is to build on this success in order to continue to meet the needs of Travellers.

The demand for our services continues to grow and this is evidenced by the fact that the Family Support Team dealt with 596 cases through the Duty/Drop-in system. There has also been a significant increase (35%) in referrals to Exchange House. The Addiction Services Team dealt with 495 cases, which included an in house and outreach service.

The Youth Service continues to play an invaluable role in relation to the engagement of young Travellers. The Education Department continues to provide the necessary supports to enable travellers to participate in the workforce. The National Educational Achievement Award for Travellers was

a fitting closure to National Social Inclusion Week. Travellers have been disadvantaged in education, with traditionally high rates of early school leaving and few Travellers going on to complete state exams. It is fabulous to see initiatives such as these encouraging young Travellers to excel in education. It is great to see so many young Travellers now go on to complete their Junior and Leaving Certificates. A milestone was reached in 2010 when Exchange House became a National Organisation. While this will create extra demand for our services I feel the benefits will outweigh any possible disadvantages. The opportunity to inform national discussions regarding the development of services for Travellers being one of the most important advantages.

None of these or our other successes would have been possible without the commitment and enthusiasm of the staff in the organisation. I would like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to all the staff of Exchange House, under the expert leadership of its Director Heydi Foster, for their continued dedication to providing quality support services for Travellers. My special thanks also to my fellow Board members for their continued support and wisdom.

To our funders – thank you!!! Thank you for your commitment and support to Travellers. A special thanks to the Christian Brothers for continuing to provide a home to Exchange House. The HSE, City of Dublin Youth Service Board, South Inner City Drug Task Force, FÁS, CDVEC, School Completion Ballyfermot and School Completion Clondalkin, POBAL and the EU Commission through Socrates, Minerva and Leonardo Da Vinci. Financially times are very tough and we are determined to work with our funders to ensure every euro we get is used effectively.

Pat Bennett

Chairperson

Director's report

Heydi Foster
Director

Welcome to Exchange House National Travellers Service's 2010 Annual Report. Exchange House prides itself in engaging with those whose needs are greatest. We work on the front-line with clients who drop-in or are referred by other service providers. Exchange House National Travellers Service is the largest Traveller specific front line service provider in the country.

Our Family Support Service provides a comprehensive multi-disciplinary approach for our clients and empowers them to resolve problems. Traditionally, Exchange House Family Support Service works with some of the poorest and most vulnerable members of the Traveller community.

During 2010 we offered Social Work, Family Support Work, Addiction Services, Out of Homelessness – Life Skills Project; Prison Services, Alcoholics Anonymous and Domestic Violence services. We have also seen a steady increase in prostitution related cases.

Our Youth Services encourages and supports the young people we work with to avoid the pitfalls of early school leaving, drugs, poverty and social exclusion. Through educational, social and personal development Exchange House Youth Service aims to ensure that as many young Travellers as possible are able to participate in youth activities. Our Youth Services worked with over 250 young people in 2010.

Our Education Service provides many different adult education programmes; from one-to-one literacy to third level support courses. We provide adult Travellers with a range of educational opportunities and provide progression routes to further education, training and employment. The needs of our clients are complex and diverse. Some are learning to read and write after poor experiences with formal education while others are accessing third level education. Some 198 clients received education services during 2010.

2010 was a year full of excitement for everyone at Exchange House. Hard to believe but we turned 30!!! We used this occasion to celebrate and to reflect on the last 3 decades.



We were very honoured to have Most Reverend Diarmuid Martin, D.D. Archbishop of Dublin and Primate of Ireland, say a special blessing to commemorate the occasion.

In reflecting on the last 30 years it is clear that Exchange House and the wider Traveller community have made great strides. Young people who we have worked with have grown into parents and community leaders. Adults who participated in literacy programmes have gone on to further education and employment. Individuals and their families suffering from addiction have conquered drug and alcohol problems. Families in crisis have been helped to resolve their problems. Their triumphs are fundamental to what we strive to achieve and the pride we are fortunate to take in our work.

I would like to thank the staff both past and present, for the level of their ongoing commitment. Our job is not glamorous, it can sometimes be challenging and thankless, but it is because of our staff and their relentless commitment, passion and dedication to the Traveller community that Exchange House is the place of excellence it is.

We look forward to our next 30 years. Our greatest hope is that we will see Travellers included fully and equally as respected and valued citizens within this republic.

Family Support Service

We offer a comprehensive multidisciplinary approach and up to three staff, a social worker, family support worker and addiction counsellor can work on one case, to best support the client. We continue to prioritise our interagency work, building networks as well as informing other organisations about Exchange House and the services we offer.

There has been a significant rise in numbers accessing our services through the Duty/ Drop-in System which is run by Family Support Team on a daily basis. 596 duty cases were seen in 2010. Since the organisation went National in 2010 we have seen an increase in the number of referrals from outside Dublin. There has also been a marked improvement in information sharing and networking with other organisations/services around the country. The Family Support Team continue to meet the growing numbers and deliver to clients a quality service based on a holistic approach towards prevention, crisis intervention and community development.

We are seeing an increased number of referrals around such issues as Habitual Residency Condition (35) and prostitution (52). The Family Support Team continues to address the following issues with clients: child protection (140), addiction (495), mental health (228), welfare (200) accommodation (380) institutional abuse (100), legal issues (199) and suicidal ideation (104). The family support team work together around these complex issues to practically support and empower clients, to help them move from crisis to sustainable situations.

Home visits/Outreach

A lot of our client work revolves around outreach and home visits. We meet clients in their own accommodation- private rented, council, homeless, transitional, official and unofficial halting sites, and also drug treatment centres and prisons. We regularly attend meetings with clients and other statutory and non-statutory agencies including; HSE, schools, local authorities, social and community welfare services and we also accompany clients to court, hospitals, Garda stations and residential centres.

Domestic Violence Service

The Family Support Team provides domestic violence support, information around options, and assists clients around safety plans, legal information

and risk assessments to clients on an ongoing basis. We assist clients with court accompaniment, accessing legal services and offer both acute and long term practical and emotional support to people who are in or have experienced Domestic Violence (628).

The Family Support Team facilitates a weekly Domestic Violence Support clinic at Rathmines Women's Refuge every Thursday. We offer support and information to Traveller women accessing the refuge. Our goal is to continue to provide support to the women where possible after they have left the refuge.

AA Meetings

Exchange House opened its doors to AA in 2010. The meetings take place on a Monday at 6pm in Exchange House and are open to Travellers and non-Travellers experiencing Alcohol addiction. These meetings have been very well received by the community. An Open Meeting was held in Exchange House in 2010 and provided great information for family members and staff members about AA. The meeting at Exchange House is now firmly established and it is to be featured in the AA Directory 109 attended the AA meeting during 2009/2010.

Parents Plus Programme

During 2010 the Family Support Team developed tailor made specific programmes to suit the needs of individual clients. The programmes were delivered in-house by Family Support Workers and Social Workers and also on an outreach basis in clients' homes. This has led to improved confidence and parenting skills among the parents who participated in the programme.

Student Placement

The service facilitated two Transition Year Work Experience students and four social work students during 2009/2010.

Addiction Service

The Addiction Service at Exchange House is offered on an outreach as well as on in house basis. 495 cases were seen during this period.

When clients present to the Family Support Department to address their addiction issues they can also avail of social work and/or family support to address other immediate and long term needs.

Models of intervention used include Motivational Interviewing, Cognitive Behavioural Therapy, 12 Step Programme, Harm Reduction, Solution-Focused and Group work – Lifeskills & AA Meetings.

While providing the above services for clients we also refer to appropriate Treatment Centres, Mental Health Services, Methadone Clinics, Health Centres, GPs, Public Health Nurses and Specialised Clinics. The Addiction Service also works closely with statutory services such as HSE Social Work Departments, Probation Services, HSE services and the Irish Prison Service.

‘Out of Homelessness’ Project

The Out of Homelessness Programme ran from March 2009 to March 2010. The aim of the project was to:

- Empower Travellers affected by homelessness and addiction
- Assist clients to address their addiction
- Support clients to leave the cycle of homelessness
- Develop Lifeskills to empower clients to maintain accommodation and access services

58 group sessions were held, 17 adults and 4 children took part in the Lifeskills group over the year. 105 individuals and families availed of the Out of the Homelessness Programme.

The hugely successful programme also included a weekly Lifeskills group that clients attended to develop skills appropriate to empower them to

address their homelessness and addiction.

As part of the Programme Evaluation, a database was developed which has allowed the department to produce statistics and analyse data. This provided us with trends and patterns for clients that are experiencing addiction and homelessness. This tool has been beneficial and useful thus allowing us to target Family Support Services more efficiently for clients. The database also provided us with interesting and in-depth data outlining the types and levels of addictions presenting for treatment at Exchange House.

Prison Work

Outreach work is offered by the team in Mountjoy, Wheatfield, St Patrick’s, Cloverhill, Castlerea and Portlaoise Prisons. Every Friday the team facilitates a clinic at the Dochas for Traveller women. They are offered practical and/or emotional support with issues arising within and outside of the prison.

The team work collaboratively with the Probation and Irish Prison Service to address clients’ needs in a holistic manner. During 2009/2010 a total of 346 cases were seen in the prisons.

In 2010 Exchange House facilitated a Lifeskills Project in collaboration with the Irish Prison Service, Probation and Community Welfare. It was identified that there was a need to inform women about the importance of Diet & Nutrition, Women’s Health, Relaxation, Welfare & Accommodation services, Probation Services and Pre-release Planning. The overall aim was to increase awareness, informing them and of services available to them while in prison and how best to utilise them.

Concurrently, an art project ran for a period of 6 weeks whereby Traveller Culture and participants’ life experiences were explored. The project resulted in the production of a unique book called “Traveller Tales” that told the stories, through illustration, of all the participants family histories and Traveller traditions and culture. The book was presented to the Governor of the Dochas Prison in September where all participants received certificates for their participation in the Lifeskills Project.

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 2010, 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.



Throughout 2010, 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 continue to build links with local service providers to ensure that the young people are accessing as many facilities as possible in their local areas. We will continue to develop programmes and build relationships which will enable the young people to take greater control of their own lives and hopefully have a more positive outlook on society.

After Schools

The Youth Service operates two After-Schools programmes one in St. Oliver's Park, Clondalkin and one in Labre Park Ballyfermot, both providing comprehensive programmes of educational assistance to 40 young people. They offer homework assistance, literacy support and computer skills along with personal development activities such as arts and crafts, music and dance as well as summer programmes. 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

The Educational Away Programme aims to develop a positive and proactive working relationship with the young people who are selected to take part in these programmes. The selection process to identify young people to partake in these programmes is done in consultation with youth workers, parents, social workers, teachers and other relevant agencies who work with young people.

The activities are designed to encourage and support the young person in their personal development through the Critical Social Education Model. These programmes are specifically designed to suit the target group.

Over the past year, the Youth Service has worked with 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 throughout Ireland and ended with a trip to London to explore culture and ethnicity.

Stay-In-School Programme

Currently Exchange House Supports and facilitates 135 young people in the education system. We are currently working in 12 different schools in our catchment areas at both primary and secondary level. 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
- Support 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. 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.

Our young people are rewarded and praised according to attendance and are recognised and awarded for educational achievement through our annual National Education Achievements Awards.

The Stay in Schools Programme tracks all of our young people including those who have transferred to secondary and those who have begun primary school. Last year we leaped from being in contact with 6 schools to 12 schools. Since our programme started, attendance has risen to 90% throughout the programme. The Youth Service works quite closely with the Exchange House Education Service to ensure the highest quality of service is delivered and educational opportunities are accessible to participants

Jeep Restoration Project

Our Jeep restoration project began in April 2009. We were donated a Land Rover Defender by the E.S.B and we set to work with a group of 8 young boys to restore the Jeep to working order. This project was part of our Educational Away Programme. The project began with the group learning basic mechanic skills and the workings of the jeep from changing water and oil to changing a tyre. They learned about log books, NCT certificates, tax and insurance and the importance of

maintenance and cleaning the Jeep. They chose a colour scheme of army green and gloss white and repainted the vehicle. When it was fully restored it was unveiled at our 30 year celebrations in October.

Summer Projects

Our summer projects consists of a week long educational fun activity based programme for every group we work with throughout the year. They lasted for eight weeks and incorporated boys and girls from all age groups in our catchment areas.

It gives the young people a chance to have fun in a safe environment and to learn many interesting facts about the city they live in and its history.

The activities included:

- The National Aquatic Centre
- Clara Lara
- A Sports Day in Glendalough
- Barbeque in the Park
- Astroturf
- Quazar
- Causey Farm
- The Cinema
- Kippure
- Maynooth Fisherys
- The Wax Museum
- The National Leprechaun Museum
- Phoenix Park

They ran to full capacity each week. Some of the highlights of the projects included herding sheep in Causey farm, bog hopping, the mystical tales of the Leprechaun museum, the leap of faith in Kippure and the Barbeque in the park.



Education Service

Exchange House Education Department provides an educational service which offers a range of educational opportunities and provides progression routes to further education, training and employment. We have developed a department where people can strive to reach their full potential. Each person is treated as an individual and their learning is tailored to suit them, taking into account their knowledge, skills and experience, whether they want to learn to read and write, access third level education or gain employment. We believe that quality education and training help to ensure equal access for Travellers in all aspects of Irish life.

FETAC Quality Assurance

Exchange House education services focuses on providing a service of quality at all times. We had been working on achieving our FETAC Quality Assurance which is a system of policies and procedures which a provider undertakes to implement in order to maintain and improve the quality of its programmes at the national standard. We are happy to report that in 2010 Exchange House National Traveller Service earned FETAC Quality Assurance, the national standard of quality

Adult Basic Education

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

FÁS Local Training Initiative (LTI)

The FÁS Local Training Initiative (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 2010 were FETAC accredited (Levels 1 - 4) and covered Communications, Mathematics, Computer Literacy, Craft, Personal Effectiveness, Living in a Diverse Society 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 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

FÁS Community Employment (CE) offered 21 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 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 2010 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, The 30 Year Celebrations, News Travels newsletter, EU projects, Intercultural Presentations and Research for various other projects.

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.

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. In 2010 The Exchange House Educational Achievement Award was opened up to third level nominees for the first time with three recipients.

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. The awards also portray positive images of the Traveller community to wider society.

The Exchange House Mosaic Project

The Exchange House Mosaic Project started in May 2010. It began with a meeting of FÁS CE and LTI learners who decided that they wanted to make a mosaic to represent Traveller education and what it means to them to be participating in adult education in Exchange House.

The group brainstormed words that they associate with the Exchange House Education programmes and came up with the following list: Knowledge,

Achievements, Rewards, Friendship, Peace and Peace of mind, Confidence, Feeling better about yourself, Experience, Hope, Courage.

The learners then decided to research images that they felt represented these concepts and ideas. They decided on a tree to represent strength, growth and its branches representing the different skills and knowledge that learners bring to Exchange House to develop and build upon. The stylised logo of Exchange House was chosen to represent an aspect of the learners Traveller identity. The butterfly was chosen to symbolise the transformation that education can bring. The dove represents peace of mind and freedom and the certificate was chosen to represent the importance of qualifications to the learners.

The design process was undertaken next, with many learners involved in choosing the images and colours. This was facilitated by their Art tutor Mary Maloney. The process of making the mosaic happened over five months with all learners from both programmes taking part.

The process of making the finished product was in itself a positive learning experience for all involved. The end result is a beautiful and vibrant piece of artwork that tells the story of the educational abilities and aspirations of The Exchange House Learners.

Introduction to the Traveller Community

This training explores Traveller culture and social issues affecting the community. This training is ideal for individuals, institutions and organisations that work with, or provide services to, members of the Traveller community.

Aim

To provide participants an insight into the Traveller community, which will lead to a greater understanding of the issues that affect the lives of Travellers, and to challenge misconceptions.

Content

Aspects of Traveller culture, Accommodation, Health, Education, Prejudice & discrimination, Positive outlook

Outcomes

Understanding of the Traveller community, Awareness of issues affecting the Traveller community, Skills to provide a culturally appropriate service to members of the Traveller community

Duration

Half-day or a full-day depending on the needs of participants

Best Practice in Working with Travellers experiencing Domestic Violence

This training is ideal for professionals and community groups. The following is intended as a guideline and will be modified to suit the needs of participants.

Aim

To provide participants with the skills and knowledge to respond in a culturally appropriate way to members of the Traveller community who are experiencing domestic violence.

Content

Introduction to the Traveller community, Definitions of domestic violence, Current legislation, Impacts of domestic violence on women and children, Barriers

to Traveller women leaving domestic violence situations, Dealing with disclosures of domestic violence, Best practice for organisations working with Travellers, Crisis intervention and safety plans

Outcomes

Skills to work effectively with members of the Traveller community who are experiencing domestic violence, Understanding of domestic violence, Knowledge of social issues affecting the Traveller community in contemporary Ireland, On completion of the course all participants will receive an information pack

Duration

3 days, however, it can be modified to suit participants in terms of content and time

Best Practice in Working with Travellers with Addiction

This training is ideal for individuals, institutions and organisations that work with, or provide services to members of the Traveller community.

Aim

To provide participants with the skills and knowledge to respond in a culturally appropriate way to members of the Traveller community who are involved in substance misuse.

Content

Introduction to Traveller community, Social exclusion and the Traveller community, Travellers and addiction, Impacts of substance misuse on the Traveller community, Barriers that prevent Travellers from accessing services, Best practice for working with Travellers with addiction

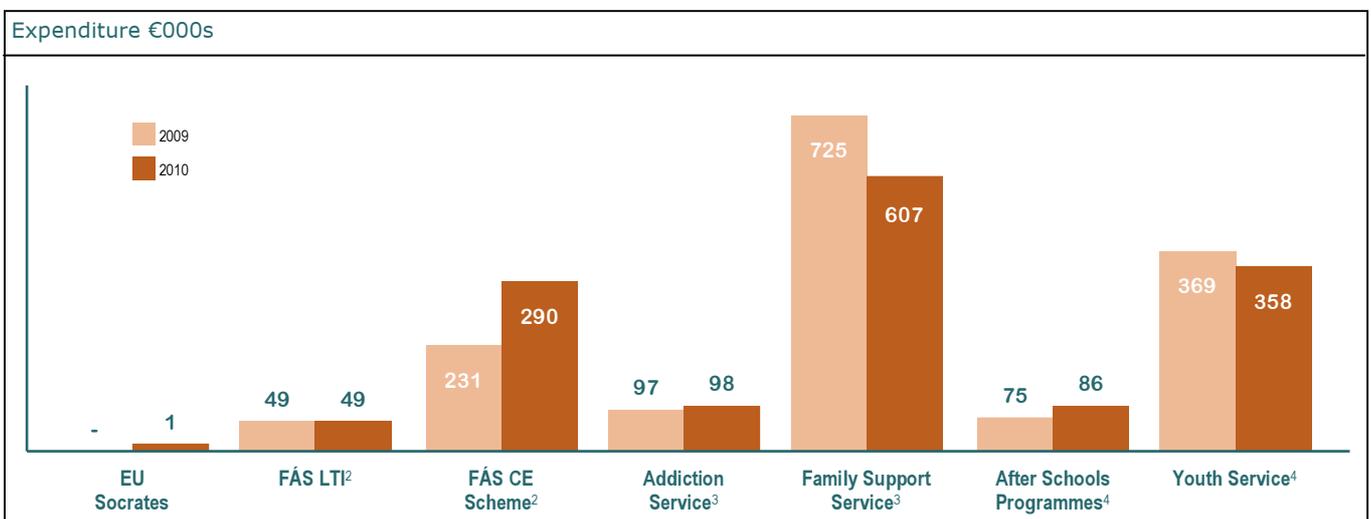
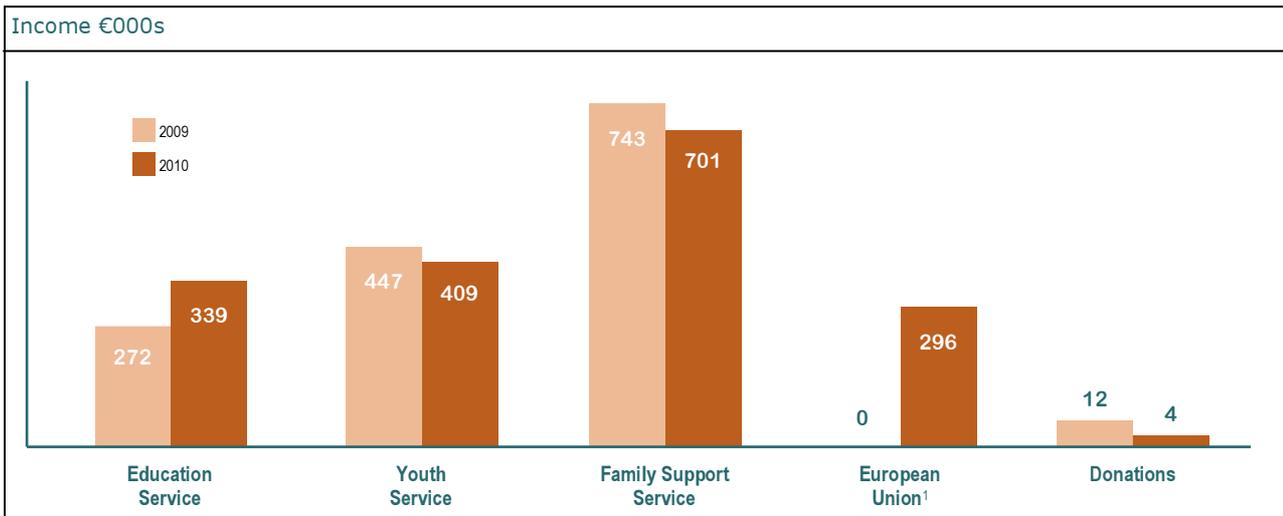
Outcomes

Better understanding of social Exclusion and its impact on substance misuse within the Traveller Community, Information on the prevalence of substance misuse, Skills to work effectively with members of the Traveller community who engage in substance misuse

Duration

A full-day or 2 half-days

Income and Expenditure



1. This EU funding is set aside for the Daphne III Domestic Violence Project 2011-2013
2. The FÁS LTI and FÁS CE Scheme expenditure is drawn from the income for the Education Service [total expenditure € 339,000]
3. The Addiction Service and Family Support Service expenditure is drawn from the income for the Family Support service [total expenditure € 705,000]
4. The After-Schools Programmes and Youth Service expenditure is drawn from the income for the Youth Service [total expenditure € 444,000]



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