



An Roinn Leanaí, Comhionannais,  
Míchumais, Lánpháirtíochta agus Óige  
Department of Children, Equality,  
Disability, Integration and Youth



# PATH Programme Evaluation

An Evaluation of the  
Pre-Adolescent  
Traveller and Roma  
Holistic  
Programme (PATH)



Doody Facilitation and Consulting Ltd  
January 2025



# Foreword



I am proud to be associated with the FDYS PATH programme. It is one of those youth-led programmes that appears to tick all the boxes in terms of inclusion and youth work. Young people generously volunteered their time to take part in the various PATH programmes, they were actively involved in planning and organising, and seemed to develop throughout. Now with this very valuable evaluation, led by our esteemed colleague Sinéad Doody, (Doody Facilitation and Consulting Ltd), we are closing off the quality cycle used in FDYS, APIE, where we assess community needs, help to put a plan in place, organise quality youth work programmes and then evaluate the impact for young people.

The growth of PATH across County Wexford is so encouraging. This originally commenced as a programme for young boys from the Traveller community. Quickly, the appeal and success became apparent and, so, thanks to the Healthy Ireland CYPSC Fund, the programme was extended to young girls, who quickly became involved. Our inclusion mission in FDYS is to make everyone feel welcome, but we make extra effort to include those from marginalised communities, including Roma, Travelling Community, LGBT, those with disabilities and families with substance misuse. PATH has worked in all of these areas!

I congratulate my hard working youth workers, who designed this programme, led it out with such gusto and who remain dedicated to the communities we serve. I thank the young people and their parents who were involved, you are our most important focus.

**Kieran Donohoe**

Chief Executive  
Ferns Diocesan Youth Service  
Youth Work Ireland



# CONTENTS

<b>METHODOLOGY</b>	<b>05</b>
<b>OVERVIEW</b>	<b>06</b>
<b>POLICY CONTEXT</b>	<b>07</b>
<b>PATH PROJECT PARTNERS</b>	<b>08</b>
<b>PATH PROJECT MODEL</b>	<b>10</b>
• Programme Aim	11
• Programme Design	11
• Target Group	11
• Principles	12
• Youth Feedback	12
• Activities	13
• Proposed Outcomes	15
• Interagency Collaboration	15
• Governance and Funding	15
• The APIE Process	16
<b>INTEGRATED YOUTH SERVICE</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>PROGRAMME STRENGTHS</b>	<b>18</b>
• Holistic Approach	
• Youth Voice	
• Inclusive and Culturally Sensitive	
• Link with Parents	
• Integrated Youth Service Model	
• Interagency Collaboration	
<b>PROGRAMME OUTCOMES</b>	<b>20</b>
• Life and Employability Skills	
• Cultural Engagement and Pride	
• School Engagement	
• Healthy Eating and Nutrition	
• Physical Fitness	
• Empowerment	
• Community Contribution	
• Leadership and Peer Support	
• Positive Behavioral Transformation	
• Trust and Relationship Building	
<b>CASE STUDIES</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>GARDA YOUTH AWARD WINNERS</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>PROJECT WORKER TESTIMONIALS</b>	<b>27</b>



*"I love going places and trying out new stuff all the time. I love learning about new things like science and building stuff and then going to places to show people what we have built and what we learned. I have learned a lot of life skills like how to look after horses and care and maintain them. Building robot cars and other tech stuff is really exciting. We get to do a lot of cool stuff. I am really proud of the circus skills and learning how to walk on stilts and put on a show. My confidence has grown because of the group and doing different stuff. I love it. There is always something different to do and learn and places to go. I would like to learn swimming next and I would like more people to start. I have two more friends who would love to do the boys group after Christmas".*



# METHODOLOGY

**In October 2024, FDYS commissioned an external consultant, Doody Facilitation and Consulting Ltd., to undertake a review of the PATH programme. The objective was to describe the model, capture learning and highlight the programme's achievements as it goes into its third year of operation.**

The review employed a mixed-methods approach, beginning with a review of project literature to understand its objectives, design, and implementation. The following materials were reviewed::

- Tusla Funding Agreement Schedule of Service (2023 & 2024)
- PATH 2 Programme Comprehensive FDYS Report and Funding Proposal (June 2024)
- Advisory Group Meeting Notes
- Project Worker Overview

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the Senior Worker and CEO to gather insights into the programme's planning, delivery, and outcomes.

Similarly, interviews with participants provided first-hand accounts of their experiences, captured through a case study interview and a personal narrative through video testimonial.

Case studies, quotes and vignettes were harvested from the *June 2024 Report and Funding Proposal* providing valuable insight into the young people's experiences and impact of the programme.

It is intended that the outcomes of this evaluation will assist in the future direction and development of the PATH programme.



# OVERVIEW



The PATH Programme is an innovative, tailored, early intervention life skills and personal development programme, initially targeting young people from the Traveller community. Due to the success of its first year, it was expanded to include young people from the Roma community in its second year.

PATH was conceived by Ferns Diocesan Youth Service as a collaborative project between its Traveller Inclusion Programme and Youth Diversion Project.

*During Covid we found that there were a cohort of young people who didn't want to engage in football and handball programmes. So ourselves (the Traveller Inclusion Project) and the Youth Diversion Project came up with this idea of broadening it out to include equine, creative arts and even things like baking and cookery.*

(FDYS Youth Worker)

In its first year, Sept 2022 to May 2023, the Programme engaged ten young Traveller boys, aged 8 - 10 years in Enniscorthy, Co. Wexford.

In its second year, September 2023 - June 2024, the project expanded significantly to engage over 100 young people from both the Traveller and Roma communities. It also expanded its geographic remit to include all of County Wexford.

PATH is funded through the CYPSC Healthy Ireland Fund.

## 2

Years

## 106

Young People

## 5

Locations





# POLICY CONTEXT

PATH aligns with broader national and local policy objectives aimed at improving the well-being of children and young people. Specifically, it contributes to the following:

- Outcome 1 of **Better Outcomes Brighter Futures (2014 - 2020)** emphasises the importance of children being active and healthy, with positive physical and mental well-being, and highlights the need for initiatives that promote healthy lifestyles and positive mental health.
- The objective of the **Healthy Ireland Fund 2023-2025** is to improve the health and wellbeing of people of all ages and abilities living in Ireland through the implementation of the Healthy Ireland Strategic Action Plan 2021-2025.
- **Wexford Children & Young People's Plan 2020-2023** identifies physical health, mental health, nutrition and overall well-being as key priorities for children and young people in the county.
- The **National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy (1 and 11)** seeks to generate transformative impacts for Travellers and Roma in the long term, giving continuity and deepening the key areas for social inclusion: education, employment, housing and healthcare.



# PATH PROJECT PARTNERS

**Led by Ferns Diocesan Youth Service, a number of agencies were crucial to the development and delivery of the PATH programme.**

## **Children and Young People's Services Committee (CYPSC)**

CYPSC brings together a wide range of agencies and organisations with a remit to support children and young people (0-24 years), identifying service gaps and collaborating and pooling resources to improve outcomes in line with “Young Ireland: National Policy Framework for Children and Young People”. Recognising the clear alignment between Young Ireland’s Outcome One (Active and Healthy, Physical and Mental Wellbeing) and the Healthy Ireland Framework, CYPSCs have been actively supporting local implementation of Healthy Ireland since 2017.

Wexford CYPSC identified young people from the Traveller and Roma communities as being disproportionately affected by health and social inequalities. In 2022, it allocated a funding to FDYS to deliver a short pilot programme - PATH - with boys from the Traveller community with the aim of improving participants’ physical and mental wellbeing. The outcomes of the pilot were so positive that it invested additional funding from the CYPSC Healthy Ireland Fund, enabling PATH to expand its numbers and extend to the Roma community.

**FDYS Traveller Inclusion Project** works with the Traveller community to build capacity by providing support, information and referrals through culturally appropriate needs-based services and programmes. Programme/interventions include:

- Cultural identity
- Gender equality and LGBTI
- Suicide awareness
- Family support
- Youth work activities
- Education and training
- Health and wellbeing
- Discrimination and racism
- Advocacy and accessing services
- Capacity building and inclusion



### **FDYS Youth Diversion Programme (YDP)**

YDPs are community based, multi-agency projects that divert young people aged 12-17 years from becoming involved or further involved in anti-social or criminal behaviour. FDYS's YDP is co-funded by the Irish Government and the European Social Fund as part of the Employment, Inclusion, Skills and Training Programme 2021-2027. It works with young people using sport, music, art, cookery and carpentry to support them to encourage continued education and improve employment prospects. It also works with parents in a supportive capacity and is involved in outreach and detached work in the community.

The programme also worked closely with other organisations involved with Traveller and Roma families or individuals, including:

- STAR Project, "Supporting Travellers and Roma", which supports students and parents from the Traveller and Roma communities in education in both primary and secondary schools.
- Primary schools in Bunclody, Taghmon, Enniscorthy, Clonroche, and Adamstown
- Secondary schools in Enniscorthy and Adamstown
- Wexford County Council provided funding to develop an information video on the project
- Wexford Local Development Company worked collaboratively with FDYS on the programme
- Tusla, Child and Family Agency facilitated the funding through CYPSC
- Taghmon Family Resource Centre also supported the programme



# PATH PROGRAMME MODEL



**PROGRAMME AIM**



**PROGRAMME DESIGN**



**TARGET GROUP**



**PRINCIPLES**



**YOUTH FEEDBACK**



**ACTIVITIES**



**PROPOSED OUTCOMES**



**COLLABORATION**



**FUNDING & GOVERNANCE**





## PROGRAMME AIM

The overall aim of the PATH Programme is to improve health outcomes and well-being among targeted groups of young people in County Wexford. It delivers bespoke youth work programmes that engage participants in a youth-friendly manner, promoting well-being, healthy diets, and active lifestyles while positively impacting their communities.

## PROGRAMME DESIGN

Using the APIE model (see page 16), young people are involved in every stage of project: starting with a comprehensive assessment of their needs, strengths, and challenges; collaborative planning to develop tailored goals and activities; active implementation through engaging and healthy programmes; and ongoing evaluation ensuring their voices are heard throughout.

## TARGET GROUP

County Wexford has the fifth highest number of Travellers in the South East and there is a concentrated community of Roma mainly residing in the Enniscorthy area and its environs.

In its first year, the Programme targeted young people, aged 8 – 12 years, from the Traveller community. In the second year, it expanded to include Roma young people. Over the two years, a total of 106 young people took part across the county, ranging from ages 8 to 19 years, and comprising 60% Travellers and 40% Roma.

Both groups experience significantly poorer outcomes compared to the general population in areas such as physical and mental health and overall well-being. Additionally, both communities are disproportionately impacted by poverty and discrimination.

Many of the young people who participated in the PATH programme were identified as having a poor attendance rate in school and behaviour issues. This included problems with adhering to rules and regulations in classrooms and school environment.

## PRINCIPLES

- Youth Work Approaches: Youth Work methods are used to build relationships with young people through planned and structured engagement
- Participation: Young people are involved in all stages of the project from design, through to implementation and evaluation
- Integrated Framework: The integrated service model ensures that the project collaborates closely with other services within FDYS and with relevant external stakeholders (see page 17 for more)
- Social Inclusion: FDYS is a universal youth service, however takes proactive steps to include marginalised communities



## YOUTH FEEDBACK

A feedback process was undertaken at the beginning and end of each activity to enable young people to give their ideas on how the activity could be improved or changed. This often happened on the bus on the way home where youth workers could engage in a relaxed way with the young people to hear their views and suggestions.

With a strong understanding of Traveller and Roma culture, youth workers skillfully used relevant language and approaches to pose questions that were relatable, easily understood, and free from judgement, within an open, supportive, and structured setting.

## ACTIVITIES

### *Equine Therapy*

The Ragtree Equine Assisted Learning (EAL) Programme is a collaborative effort between a facilitator, an equine professional and a horse. The interactions focus on applying certain skills - non-verbal communication, assertiveness, leadership, problem-solving and taking responsibility. Equine therapy is beneficial in supporting children to increase their resilience, enhance feelings of mastery and self-efficacy, self-confidence, assertiveness, optimism, adaptability, trust and tolerance. PATH EAL activities ran in cooperation with a number of schools throughout the county.



*"The Equine Therapy proved to be the most popular project piece. A total of 70 participants took part in the programme from the Traveller and Roma communities. All attendees had a love of horses. Some had their own horses already, whilst others had family members and relations who had horses. To watch the young people from both communities every week feed, groom, walk and ride the horses was a sight to behold".*

(PATH Project Worker)

### *Fitness Classes*

- Traveller fitness classes operated every Wednesday afternoon in Nolan Health and Fitness Bunclody.
- Roma fitness classes operated every Monday morning for 8 weeks in January-February 2024.
- Traveller Girls fitness in SYNERGY Fitness operated on Friday afternoon in Drinagh for 6 weeks.
- Two 6-week introduction to kickboxing mixed gender courses were delivered in Enniscorthy and Taghmon.







## *Creative Arts*

Art and crafts therapy ran on Tuesday evenings from October - December 2023 in the Family Resource Centre Taghmon. See Case Study 2 for more.

## *Circus Skills*

Through the Rí Rá Festival of Children's Art, three boys from the programme undertook a circus skills workshop and were also on the panel as young leaders helping to shape the festival's programme.



## *Creative Technology*

Kinia is an education focused non-profit, charity and social enterprise that aims to make future-focused skills and learning opportunities available to children and young people.

The young people took part in workshops to unlock their potential in Science, Technology, Engineering, Art and Maths (STEAM). These included "Robot Wars" (building your own robot), harnessing the power of the sun through solar fans and innovative ways to manage waste.



## *Other Activities and Events*

Opportunities were provided for the young people to engage in other activities and events including: GAA football, soccer, handball, basketball, badminton, tennis, boxing, cookery and bakery, and community initiatives such as Tea on the Green.

*"The young people have gain a lot of skills and they have demonstrated a significant growth in confidence and competence when taking on the task in hand"*

## PROPOSED OUTCOMES

The programme aimed to achieve the following short, medium and long-term outcomes:

### Young People's Health and Wellbeing

- Improved self-perceived health
- Improved awareness of health and decision-making relating to healthy choices
- Enhanced positive mental health and well-being (self-reported)
- Enhanced links between young people and health services, where required

### Engagement and Participation of Young People

- Engagement of young people in enjoyable, healthy activities
- Enhanced participation of seldom-heard young people in decisions that affect them

### Family and Community

- Stronger relationships with parents/guardians
- Promotion of healthy lifestyles within the target family units



## INTERAGENCY COLLABORATION

The programme worked in partnership with a wide range of external services. These include primary and secondary schools, An Garda Síochána, Wexford County Council, Wexford Local Development, Tusla, and other relevant agencies and stakeholders supporting Traveller young people and families. This collaborative approach was key to the programme model and outcomes.

## GOVERNANCE AND FUNDING

The programme is managed by Ferns Diocesan Youth Service CLG, a registered charity and a member youth service of Youth Work Ireland. The programme falls under FDYS's Traveller Inclusion Project which aims to work with Traveller communities throughout county Wexford to build Traveller capacity by providing support, information and referrals through culturally appropriate needs-based services and programmes.



## THE APIE PROCESS

**APIE is a structured yet simple approach to guiding the design and delivery of effective and person-centred programmes. It ensures a systematic, reflective, and adaptable approach.**



- **Assess:** This initial stage involves an assessment of the needs, strengths, and challenges of the young people to form a holistic understanding of their needs.
- **Plan:** Based on the assessment, a plan is developed with specific goals and activities tailored to the young people's needs and preferences.
- **Implement:** The plan is put into action, through fun, healthy programmes and ongoing collaboration with the young people
- **Evaluate:** The final stage involves reviewing the outcomes of the programmes/activities to determine their effectiveness.



# INTEGRATED YOUTH SERVICE MODEL

The PATH programme is underpinned by the integrated youth service model which has the following five characteristics\*:

**1. Youth-centred, and assets-based:** Young people are at the centre of service provision and are offered a range of supports and resources from point of entry. Young people engage with youth work not “as a problem” and the activities help them to identify and develop their strengths and resources.

**2. Comprehensive and holistic:** Young people can access the full range of youth services from their point of entry. Internal supports for additional needs, as well as resources to nurture strengths and interests, are made available.

**3. Consistent, structured approach:** All staff are knowledgeable about the integrated model, and they work to it. There is a high level of communication between management and staff, ensuring fluidity and effectiveness of service delivery.

#### **4. Co-location and external service**

**integration:** If a young person needs additional supports, or has a strength or interest that cannot be catered for internally, external opportunities are sought and made known to the young person. Youth Workers act as an essential gateway to both internal and external statutory and voluntary services.



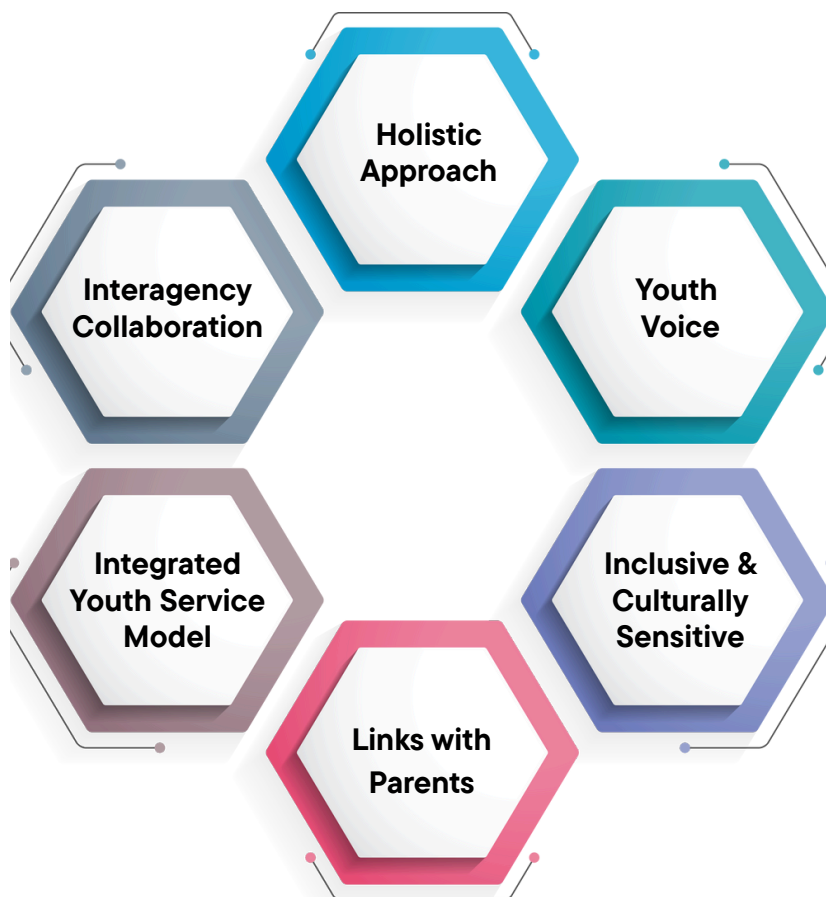
**5. Community-based:** Youth services work best when integrated into the community. They have a unique position in communities due to the long-standing relationships that have been cultivated with parents, community and voluntary groups, and with the young people themselves.

\*Reference: *Integrated Youth Services*, Final Report from the Evaluation of Youth Work Ireland's Integrated Youth Services Model Evidence Review, November 2019



# PROGRAMME STRENGTHS

**This review demonstrates that the PATH Programme effectively met its objectives, contributing towards improved health outcomes and well-being for targeted Traveller and Roma young people in County Wexford. Its success is attributed to six interconnected features, detailed below, that work synergistically to facilitate these positive outcomes.**



## **1. Holistic Approach**

The programme took a holistic approach to promoting physical, mental, and emotional well-being through diverse activities in a supportive, youth-centered environment. It provided targeted support for at-risk young people with behavioural, educational and other needs, focusing on building confidence and promoting personal development.

## **2. Youth Voice**

Using the API model, the young people were involved in all stages of the project, from design through to implementation and evaluation. This approach not only empowered young people by giving them a voice in the process, but also helped them develop valuable skills such as teamwork, critical thinking, and problem-solving.

## **3. Inclusive and Culturally Sensitive**

The programme provided a safe space for Traveller and Roma young people to explore their culture while challenging themselves to try something new. This fostered a sense of pride in their heritage while encouraging personal growth and the confidence to embrace change.

## **4. Links with Parents**

The programme aimed to engage parents and guardians from the outset, recognising their vital role in embedding learning within families. Building these relationships fostered trust, and positive word-of-mouth spread awareness of the programme and its benefits. This facilitated parents to support their children's participation in PATH and also enabled youth workers to gently direct parents towards other services if needed.

## **5. Integrated Youth Service Model**

Through an integrated service model, the project collaborated closely with other services within the FDYS' Traveller cluster, such as FDYS STAR (Supporting Travellers and Roma through Education), FDYS SYDP (Slaney Youth Diversion Project), and FDYS ECYP (Enniscorthy Community Youth Project). This model ensured a joined-up approach to supporting the needs of the Traveller young people and their families, optimising outcomes and the impact of available resources.

## **6. Interagency Collaboration**

A key strength of the PATH programme lay in its successful translation of national policy into practical, impactful action. The programme's contribution to tackling health inequalities serves as a model for effective policy implementation through strong interagency collaboration.



# PROGRAMME OUTCOMES

This review report explores the design and delivery of the PATH Programme, and considers its impact on the targeted group of young Traveller and Roma people who took part.

The findings show that the PATH initiatives, such as Equine Therapy, Health and Fitness, Therapeutic Creative Arts, have made a positive contribution to the lives of these young people in a range of ways. This includes improved health and well-being, increased educational attendance, enhanced pride in their culture, confidence building, teamwork, participation, empowerment, and personal development.

This section summarises the findings of the primary and secondary research, extracting key outcomes under the following headings:

- Life and Employability Skills
- Cultural Engagement and Pride
- School Engagement
- Healthy Eating and Nutrition
- Physical Fitness
- Empowerment
- Community Contribution
- Leadership and Peer Support
- Positive Behavioural Transformation
- Trust and Relationship Building

**1. Life and Employability Skills:** Young people developed skills and knowledge in a range of areas relating to life and employment, including: team work, leadership, creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship, technology, horse care, fitness and health, performance and circus skills, communication skills and public speaking.

*"I love going places and trying out new stuff all the time. I love learning about new things like science and building stuff and then going to places to show people what we have built and what we learned."*

**2. Cultural Engagement and Pride:** The young people reported a sense of belonging and cultural pride by engaging in activities where they could explore their culture and heritage in a "safe space" environment.

*"The boys were able to live their culture and heritage without being judged. The young boys discovered parts of their own individuality in regards to their strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats"*

**3. School Engagement:** The programme helped young people with poor school attendance, literacy challenges, and behavioral issues to re-engage with education and refocus their energy in positive ways.

*"Some of the work that Paula, Cate and Jane have carried out in Clonroche National School has made an incredible difference to the lives and educational experiences of the STAR [PATH] pupils in the school"*

**4. Healthy Eating and Nutrition:**

Participants gained knowledge about healthy eating, which they shared with their families, promoting broader community benefits.

*"The boys also learned about the benefits of a healthy diet to help them maintain a healthier lifestyle that would benefit them in the long run, and also brought this information back to their families"*

**5. Physical Fitness:** Participants learned safe and effective training techniques and improved their physical fitness and wellbeing.



**6. Empowerment:** Traveller and Roma young people, particularly girls, were empowered to challenge cultural norms and engage in activities that they didn't traditionally participate in, such as equine, fitness and sports.

*"It is not very common that young Traveller girls engage in exercise activities.  
..The fact that they wanted to try something that would improve their health  
and well-being was a huge benefit to them"*

**7. Community Contribution:** Through a range of activities, including creative arts and the Rí Rá Festival, young people contributed to community initiatives which helped to foster empathy and a sense of achievement in the young people involved.

*"Many young girls felt a great sense of achievement and satisfaction that  
they made a difference in people's lives that they were not familiar with"*

**8. Leadership and Peer Support:** Some young people demonstrated leadership skills by encouraging positive behaviour among their peers and supporting their positive engagement in the programme.

*"If he saw anyone being mistreated or misbehaving on the bus, he would soon  
put a stop to it saying "do we know how lucky we are to get the opportunity to  
be part of the PATH programme? We need to be more considerate to the  
people that are bringing us, not everyone gets the same chance".*

**9. Positive Behavioral Transformations:** Through positive role-modelling and one-to-one reflective engagement, significant improvements in behavior were observed in participants previously facing challenges like school suspension.

*"By pushing themselves beyond what they believed were their limitations, it  
created more opportunities to push themselves even further which helped them  
improve their behaviours in a more positive sense"*

**10. Building Trust and Relationships:** The programme nurtured a sense of safety and collaboration within the group. This helped the young people to strengthen their trust in each other and in the facilitators and youth workers.

*"His attitude and behavior changed immensely because it taught him to  
learn to trust people"*



# CASE STUDIES\*

\*as narrated by PATH Project Workers



## CASE STUDY 1



“A young boy from the Roma Community was ‘causing difficulties’ at school. He was suspended on a regular basis due to bad behaviour, intimidation and poor attendance. Little or no hope was expressed in him staying in school or having a somewhat normal life. The minute he started the equine programme he changed. He moved from someone who was never going to change to someone who showed a caring and nurturing side, not only for the horses but also to his community. He would help the young people who were insecure or struggling. His attitude and behaviour changed immensely because the programme taught him to learn to trust people. From a young person who was cautious of people, he is now excelling and has the confidence to allow people who really want to help him in life. He is now with another youth programme and doing really well”.

“The creative arts therapy was introduced to 12 young girls, aged 14 - 17 years, who enjoyed doing arts and crafts projects but wanted to produce a therapeutic piece that could make a difference in other people’s lives. They created Christmas gifts and packages to be delivered to elderly people living on their own who might not have any families. They worked for 6 weeks every Tuesday evening from 5pm -7pm to ensure all gifts were finished and delivered in time for Christmas. Many of the girls had a great sense of achievement and satisfaction that they made a difference in people’s lives that they didn’t know. It made them realise how lucky they were and how they may have made a difference in a stranger’s life and it felt good”



## CASE STUDY 2



## CASE STUDY 3 ↓



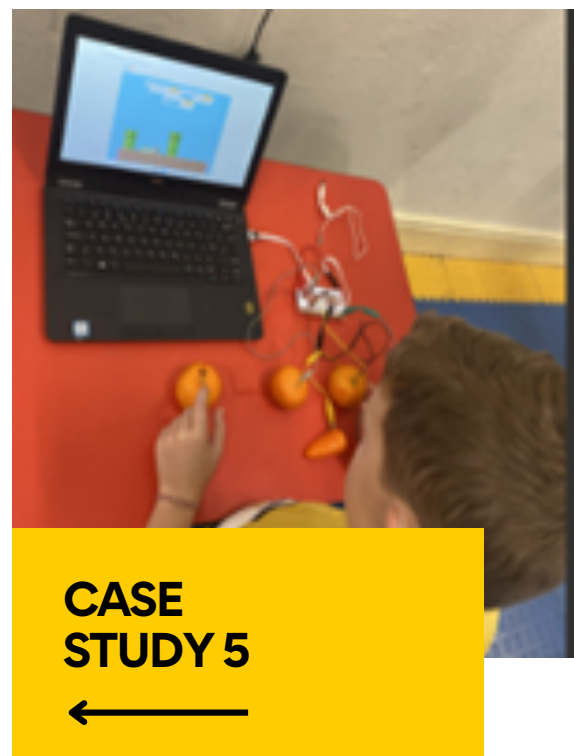
“Ten young girls, aged of 13 – 19 years, took part in a 6-week exercise and fitness programme. The classes consisted of a variety of exercise sessions and routines. This proved to be of great benefit to the young girls’ overall health and well-being. It is not very common that young Traveller girls engage in exercise activities with many having domestic duties at home along with many other traditions such as cooking, make-up and hair, tanning etc. The fact that they wanted to try something that would improve their health and well-being was a huge benefit to them on a personal level.

The six weeks consisted of spinning, strength and conditioning, aerobics and other variations. They were taught the benefits of stretching and breathing to improve their overall health on a daily basis and many spoke of how happy they were with their results and weight loss. They understood the importance of healthy eating and brought the information and knowledge back to their families so they too could benefit and understand how living a healthier life can improve their well-being mentally and emotionally. The funding from CYPSC Healthy Ireland Fund gave the young women the opportunity to break out of the norms they had grown accustomed to.”



“Four young boys took part in the exercise and fitness programme. These young people were identified as having behavioural issues in school in regards to bullying, poor school attendance and literacy issues. The fitness programme refocused their energy in a more positive and controlled environment, where they were being monitored in their training. They were shown proper exercises and techniques that benefited them in focusing their anger and frustrations more positively than negatively. The benefits of this training improved their well-being and increased their confidence. By pushing themselves beyond what they believed were their limitations, they created more opportunities to push themselves even further which helped them improve their behaviour in a more positive sense”.

“A young teenager, who lost both parents, found significant support through PATH. He enjoyed the programme's hands-on approach, particularly the opportunities to explore new places and learn new skills. He loved learning about science, building projects, animal care (specifically horses), robotics, and circus skills. He reported that his confidence has increased due to the programme's supportive environment and the diverse activities offered. He was very happy with the programme, and even hoped to be able to learn swimming, and wished more of his friends could join. A family member expressed deep gratitude for the support provided, emphasising its crucial role in his ongoing development and well-being.”





# GARDA YOUTH AWARD WINNERS 2022

Documentary makers funded through Wexford County Council engaged with the PATH Programme to film the young people's engagement in the Equine Assisted Learning programme. The YouTube short documentary, called Travelling Voices\*, was launched in September 2022 in Enniscorthy library with members of the Traveller community in attendance, along with the Mayor, local Councillors and An Garda Síochána.

In October 2022, the young people received a Garda Youth Award. An event was held in the Wexford County Council building to honour young people in the county who went above and beyond to make a difference in their community.

"These young men are paving the way to make changes in their community by being open to change and engaging in opportunities to change the stigmatisation that forever seems to overshadow the community when it comes to Traveller boys/men. These young boys are hopefully the catalyst that can be the first step in positive social change that may cause a ripple effect throughout the community and inspire other young members to do the same". (FDYS quote)

\* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MNn8SThnDF0>



# PROJECT WORKERS TESTIMONIAL

**Worker 1:** “However, seeing the horses every week wasn’t always the most important factor. Every week the young people would be collected from their school to travel to the Equine Therapy and returned by bus. It was the bus journey is where a lot of learning was achieved. It was here the young people told stories, sang songs that were played and the words written down on paper for them to sing. It was on this journey that young people would have differences and conflicts and learn how to resolve the matters before they got to their destination. It was on this journey that we, the facilitators, saw young individuals that were unique to their culture in regards to their own values, beliefs and morals. It was the journey where we saw young people who were less well off than others and who needed extra supports. It was on the journey where young people were struggling in school in mainstream education but excelled in their knowledge of their own culture or the learning they had received on the day. It was on the journey we saw the changes in individuals, the group dynamics, the friendships that were gained and the leaders that emerged”.

**Worker 2:** “We had an incredible experience bringing young people to Ragtree Equine Therapy, where they connected with horses in a meaningful way. This programme was run multiple times with our Junior Roma Group and Roma teenagers, giving them the chance to engage with an important part of their cultural heritage. One of the most heartwarming moments was seeing a young person with autism eagerly being the first in line for the bus every time. The sessions were truly enjoyable for all involved, providing not just therapeutic benefits but also a sense of joy and tradition”.



*"The PATH programme is a great example of what can be achieved when agencies come together to work towards a common goal. It also shows the practical implementation of national policy, in this case the reduction of health inequalities."*

CYPSC Coordinator (Funder)