

THOMAS MCCANN

TRAVELLER
COUNSELLING
SERVICE

4TH NOV 2020

NEED TO DEVELOP CULTURALLY INCLUSIVE SERVICE AND PRACTICE

TRAVELLER POPULATION

- roughly 40.000 people
- Very High percentage of Travellers under the age of 25
- A third of Travellers live in the greater Dublin area
- Life expectancy for men in the community is 15 years less than in the majority population and 12 years less for Traveller women
- Infant mortality rates are three times higher in the Traveller population

TRAVELLER CULTURE

- Nomadic
- Extended family
- Self employed
- Own language
- Music, singing
- Oral tradition, stories, passing on of history
- Cures, healing people
- Religion
- Illness, Death, marriage, christenings, family occasions

ISSUES

- Poor Accommodation
- Poor health
- Exclusion from goods and services
- Educationally disadvantaged
- Discrimination and racism, for example in employment
- Families being forced to live in poor overcrowded conditions
- Restrictive laws, trespass legislation, control of horses act, control of markets

MENTAL HEALTH ISSUE

- Suicide 7 times higher among Travellers than in the majority population
- Very high rates of depression
- Higher numbers of Travellers in psychiatric units in comparison to the majority population
- Drug use in the Traveller community very high, both prescription and illegal drugs
- Travellers are in crisis by the time they engage with mental health services

BARRIERS FOR THE TRAVELLER COMMUNITY

- Travellers are invisible in the services, no ethnic identifier
- Lack of acknowledgment and respect for Traveller culture
- In fact Traveller Culture can be viewed by some as deviant and see their role as helping Travellers to move away from this culture and way of life
- services can view Traveller culture as the problem
- Models and frameworks that are ethnocentric and which are based on the values and needs of the majority community

HOW DO WE BEGIN TO CHANGE THIS?

- by developing an awareness that change is needed and that many groups including Travellers are being excluded sometimes intentionally and sometimes unintentionally because of their cultural background.
- And then identifying what steps are needed to make this change come about

BELIEFS AND ATTITUDES

- Being aware and sensitive to our own cultural heritage and how this shapes who we are, our values, norms traditions, we are all cultural beings
- Having an understanding of how our own cultural background influences how we engage with others from other cultural backgrounds
- valuing and respecting diversity
- Understanding how comfortable we are with difference
- Being aware of the stereotypes and Biases of Travellers that one carries
- Being aware of our emotional reactions and responses to members of the Traveller community

KNOWLEDGE

- Have an understanding and knowledge of the cultural groups we are working with, family systems, community hierarchies, taboos,
- Develop an understanding of how racism, discrimination and oppression operates and how it has impacted on the particular group we are we are working with
- understanding the sociopolitical influences and how these impact on the group and individuals we are working with
- Understanding the barriers that the group face
- Having an understanding of the historical and contemporary relationships between the majority community and the Traveller community

SKILLS

- that we familiarize ourselves with the relevant research regarding Travellers
- Develop a broad range of helping styles
- We need to develop a reflective practice
- Communication, listening, language that is used, body language
- Be interested in the community outside of work for example Traveller pride or other events that are organised
- Developing empathy with the people we are working with

ETHNOCENTRIC MODELS

- We need to evaluate and challenge the models of counselling and therapy that have been developed mainly by white middle class settled men
- Which are mainly individual focused and in most cases do not take into account the cultural, social, economic or political context that the person is coming from
- We need to examine the expectations, assumptions and values that underpin these models and approaches and modify and change them if necessary so that they don't become a source of exclusion.
- These models use a particular frameworks to understand clients problems we need to examine these frameworks and models, to ensure that they are culturally inclusive

CONCLUSION

- We need to differentiate between service being culturally inclusive and individuals developing culturally appropriate interventions and responses
- Ethnic identifier
- Policy regarding developing culturally inclusive services and supports
- And finally Travellers need to be employed in the service and not recipients of the service, where Travellers see themselves reflected in the services