# Request for Tenders: Research into the Needs of the Traveller Community in County Carlow

## 1. Introduction

Carlow County Development Partnership CLG (CCDP), established in 2009, is responsible for managing and delivering various economic and social development programmes for communities, enterprises, and individuals in Carlow Town and County. This research is being funded under the Dormant Accounts Fund 2025, in collaboration with Carlow County Council.

**Context and Background**

The Traveller community in Ireland comprises approximately 0.7% of the population (Census 2022) and represents the country's largest indigenous ethnic minority. Despite constitutional recognition and legislative protections, the Traveller community continues to face persistent challenges across multiple domains of life, including education, employment, health, accommodation, and social inclusion. Research consistently demonstrates that Travellers experience systemic discrimination, cultural marginalisation, and disproportionately poor outcomes across key indicators of wellbeing.

National data reveals stark disparities: Traveller life expectancy is 15.1 years lower for men and 11.5 years lower for women compared to the general population. Educational attainment remains significantly below national averages, with only 13% of Travellers completing second-level education compared to 90% of the general population. Unemployment rates amongst Travellers are approximately 80%, and overcrowded and inadequate accommodation affects a substantial proportion of Traveller families.

**Local Context: Carlow**

County Carlow is home to an estimated 350-400 members of the Traveller community, representing approximately 0.6% of the county's population. The community is distributed across both urban areas in Carlow town and rural locations throughout the county, with several established Traveller-specific accommodation sites and a significant number of families living in mainstream housing.

In recent years, Carlow has experienced a deeply concerning rise in deaths by suicide across all communities, which has had a profound and disproportionate impact on the Traveller community. Mental health challenges within the Traveller community are compounded by factors including social isolation, discrimination, bereavement, trauma, and limited access to culturally appropriate mental health services. The COVID-19 pandemic has further exacerbated existing inequalities and mental health challenges.

Local service providers have identified significant gaps in understanding the specific needs, experiences, and aspirations of Travellers in Carlow. There is a recognised need for evidence-based research to inform more effective, culturally responsive service delivery and policy development.

Carlow County Development Partnership and Carlow County Council are committed to advancing equality and improving outcomes for Travellers through informed, evidence-based action. This research is being commissioned to provide a comprehensive assessment of the needs, priorities, and barriers faced by the Traveller community in Carlow and to inform more effective and inclusive service provision and policy responses, with particular attention to mental health, wellbeing, and suicide prevention.

## 2. Research Assignment

The researcher (or research team) selected for this assignment will be tasked with conducting comprehensive primary research with members of the Traveller community in County Carlow, alongside relevant stakeholders and service providers.

**Overall Research Aim:**

This research aims to develop a comprehensive, evidence-based understanding of the lived experiences, needs, and aspirations of the Traveller community in County Carlow, with particular focus on mental health and wellbeing challenges. The study seeks to identify systemic barriers to inclusion and equality, examine the cultural appropriateness and effectiveness of existing services, and generate actionable recommendations that will inform culturally responsive policy and practice improvements to enhance outcomes and opportunities for Travellers across all life domains.

**Primary Research Objectives:**

* To identify and analyse the key needs, challenges, barriers, and aspirations of the Traveller community in Carlow across multiple life domains
* To assess the accessibility, cultural appropriateness, relevance, and effectiveness of existing services and supports, particularly in the areas of mental health, wellbeing, and suicide prevention
* To identify critical gaps in services and opportunities for improvement and development
* To examine experiences of discrimination, racism, and social exclusion, and their impact on community wellbeing
* To explore protective factors and community strengths that support resilience and positive outcomes
* To develop practical, evidence-based, and strategic recommendations to improve inclusion, equity, and outcomes for the Traveller community in Carlow

**Secondary Research Objectives:**

* To analyse relevant national and local data on Traveller socio-economic and health indicators
* To review existing research, policy frameworks, and best practice models relevant to Traveller inclusion
* To map current service provision and identify coordination opportunities

The research must adopt a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative analysis with qualitative inquiry to provide a comprehensive understanding of Traveller experiences in Carlow. It is expected to include:

* **Quantitative analysis** of local and national data on Travellers' socio-economic, health, education, and accommodation indicators
* **Qualitative research** through in-depth interviews, focus groups, and community consultations with Travellers across different age groups and family structures
* **Stakeholder engagement** with service providers, statutory agencies, and community organisations
* **Case studies** of relevant local initiatives, programmes, or interventions
* **Participatory research elements** that meaningfully involve Traveller voices in shaping research questions, data collection, analysis, and recommendations
* **Community validation processes** including stakeholder workshops to verify findings and promote shared learning and action planning
* **Literature review** of relevant national and international research and policy frameworks

All research will be conducted in accordance with rigorous ethical standards and best practice guidelines for research with marginalised communities.

## 3. Methodology and Research Standards

**Methodological Requirements:**

The research must utilise a combination of data collection methods including face-to-face interviews, focus groups, community meetings, and structured questionnaires. The researcher will be required to work closely with Traveller representatives, community leaders, and support organisations to ensure cultural appropriateness, accessibility, and community ownership of the research process.

Particular care must be taken when approaching sensitive topics such as trauma, discrimination, bereavement, and mental health. The research must be conducted in a supportive, trauma-informed manner that prioritises participant safety and wellbeing.

**Target Participants:**

**Primary Participants:**

* Members of the Traveller community living in County Carlow, ensuring representation across:
	+ Age groups (children, young people, adults, older people)
	+ Gender (men, women, and other gender identities)
	+ Life stages (students, parents, carers, retirees)
	+ Accommodation types (halting sites, group housing, private accommodation)
	+ Geographic distribution across the county

**Secondary Participants:**

* Frontline service providers in sectors including health, mental health, education, housing, social services, youth work, community development, and Garda Síochána
* Senior managers and policy makers from statutory agencies
* Representatives from Traveller organisations and advocacy groups
* Community leaders and elders within the Traveller community

**Sample Size Requirements:**

**Minimum Requirements:**

* No fewer than 30 members of the Traveller community participating in individual interviews or focus groups
* At least one senior representative from a minimum of 10 different agencies or services
* At least 2 community validation sessions with Traveller participants
* At least 1 stakeholder workshop with service providers

**Recommended Sample:**

* 40-50 Traveller community members across different data collection methods
* 15-20 service provider representatives
* Multiple community engagement sessions

**Data Collection Instruments:**

Research instruments (questionnaires, interview guides, focus group schedules) will be developed in consultation with Carlow County Development Partnership, Carlow County Council, and Traveller community representatives. These must cover relevant domains including:

* **Education:** Access, experiences, barriers, aspirations, and outcomes
* **Employment:** Experiences, barriers, discrimination, training needs, and economic participation
* **Health and Mental Health:** Access to services, cultural appropriateness, specific health needs, mental health support, and suicide prevention
* **Accommodation:** Quality, security, adequacy, and experiences of different accommodation types
* **Social Inclusion and Community Relations:** Experiences of discrimination, social isolation, community connections, and intercultural relationships
* **Culture and Identity:** Maintenance of cultural practices, language, traditions, and identity
* **Service Access:** Barriers, facilitators, and experiences of accessing mainstream and specialist services
* **Family and Community Strengths:** Protective factors, resilience, and positive community assets

All instruments must be informed by secondary research, existing validated tools where appropriate, and community input to ensure cultural sensitivity and relevance.

## 4. Research Ethics and Safeguarding

**Ethical Framework:**

All research activities must be conducted in accordance with the highest ethical standards, including:

**Institutional Ethics Approval:**

* The researcher must obtain formal ethical approval from a recognised Research Ethics Committee (university-based or professional body)
* Evidence of ethical approval must be provided before data collection commences

**Informed Consent:**

* Written informed consent must be obtained from all adult participants
* Appropriate consent procedures must be established for participants under 18 years, including parental/guardian consent and child assent
* Participants must be fully informed about the research purpose, methods, potential risks and benefits, data storage, and their rights
* Consent forms must be available in accessible formats and plain English

**Confidentiality and Anonymity:**

* All participant data must be anonymised and stored securely
* No individual participants should be identifiable in the final report
* Particular care must be taken given the small size of the local Traveller community
* Data protection protocols must comply with GDPR requirements

**Vulnerable Participants:**

* The research must adopt a trauma-informed approach, recognising that participants may have experienced discrimination, racism, or other traumatic experiences
* Appropriate support mechanisms must be in place for participants who become distressed
* Researchers must be trained in recognising signs of distress and have clear referral pathways to support services

**Cultural Sensitivity:**

* Research methods must be culturally appropriate and respectful of Traveller culture and traditions
* The research team should include, or work closely with, individuals with lived experience of the Traveller community
* Community protocols and preferences for engagement must be respected

**Child Protection:**

* All researchers involved in data collection must have appropriate Garda vetting
* Clear child protection protocols must be in place
* Researchers must be aware of mandatory reporting requirements

**Data Management:**

* All data must be stored securely and in compliance with GDPR
* Clear data retention and destruction policies must be established
* Participants must be informed about data storage, sharing, and retention

## 5. Deliverables and Reporting Requirements

**Primary Deliverables:**

1. **Inception Report** (within 2 weeks of contract commencement):
	* Detailed research plan and timeline
	* Finalised methodology and instruments
	* Evidence of ethical approval
	* Risk assessment and mitigation strategies
2. **Interim Progress Report** (at 8-week mark):
	* Update on data collection progress
	* Preliminary emerging themes
	* Any methodological adjustments required
3. **Final Research Report** (by 30th November 2025):
	* Comprehensive analysis of findings
	* Evidence-based recommendations with implementation priorities
	* Executive summary (maximum 4 pages)
	* Full report (maximum 80 pages, excluding appendices)
4. **Plain English Summary** (by 30th November 2025):
	* Accessible 4-page summary of key findings and recommendations
	* Suitable for community distribution
5. **Presentation of Findings**:
	* Presentation to CCDP Board and Carlow County Council
	* Community presentation to Traveller participants
	* Stakeholder presentation to service providers

**Report Requirements:**

* All reports must be written in clear, accessible language
* The final report must include a detailed methodology section, literature review, findings, analysis, and recommendations
* Recommendations must be specific, actionable, and prioritised
* Reports must include relevant data visualisations (charts, graphs, tables)
* An implementation framework for recommendations should be included
* Reports must be provided in both PDF and editable Word formats

## 6. Budget and Value for Money

The total budget for this research, covering all associated costs, is up to a maximum of **€20,000 (excluding VAT)**.

This budget must cover:

* Researcher fees and expenses
* Data collection costs (travel, venues, refreshments, incentives for participants)
* Transcription services
* Data analysis software
* Report production costs
* Ethical approval fees
* Any specialist consultation fees

**Value for Money Considerations:**

* Tenders will be evaluated on value for money, not solely on lowest cost
* The budget must demonstrate efficient use of resources whilst maintaining research quality
* Cost breakdowns should be provided showing allocation across different research activities

The researcher will also be required to work with a Plain English/literacy service to ensure the final report is accessible and clear to a broad audience. The cost of this service will be borne by Carlow County Development Partnership CLG.

## 7. Timeline and Key Milestones

**Project Timeline:**

* **Project Start Date:** September 2025
* **Final Report Delivery:** 30th January 2026 (latest)
* **Project Duration:** 20 weeks maximum

**Key Milestones:**

| **Week** | **Milestone** |
| --- | --- |
| 1-2 | Contract finalisation, inception report, ethical approval |
| 3-4 | Community engagement, stakeholder mapping, instrument piloting |
| 5-10 | Primary data collection phase |
| 8 | Interim progress report |
| 11-12 | Additional data collection, community validation |
| 13-14 | Data analysis, report drafting |
| 15-16 | Final report completion, stakeholder presentations |

Tender submissions proposing a completion date after 30th January 2026 will not be considered.

## 8. Profile of the Selected Researcher/Research Team

**Essential Requirements:**

The selected researcher or research team must demonstrate:

**Academic and Professional Qualifications:**

* Postgraduate qualification in a relevant field (sociology, social policy, public health, psychology, or related discipline)
* Minimum 5 years' experience conducting social research

**Specialist Knowledge and Experience:**

* **Comprehensive Knowledge:** Deep understanding of the experiences, culture, history, and contemporary challenges facing the Traveller community in Ireland
* **Research Expertise:** Proven experience conducting culturally competent research with marginalised or minority ethnic communities
* **Mental Health Understanding:** Strong understanding of mental health challenges, trauma-informed approaches, and culturally appropriate responses
* **Local Context:** Familiarity with the Carlow context and local service landscape (or demonstrated ability to rapidly acquire this knowledge)

**Technical Skills:**

* Experience with mixed-methods research approaches
* Proficiency in qualitative data analysis (thematic analysis, framework analysis)
* Quantitative data analysis skills (descriptive statistics, data visualisation)
* Excellent report writing and communication skills
* Experience presenting research findings to diverse audiences

**Ethical and Cultural Competency:**

* Experience working with Research Ethics Committees
* Understanding of GDPR and data protection requirements
* Cultural competency in working with Traveller communities
* Trauma-informed research experience
* Experience with participatory and community-based research approaches

## 9. Evaluation Criteria

Tender submissions will be evaluated according to the following weighted criteria:

| **Criteria** | **Marks** |
| --- | --- |
| Understanding of the Brief and Research Approach | 15 |
| Knowledge and Experience with Traveller Communities | 25 |
| Researcher Qualifications and Track Record | 20 |
| Understanding of Policy and Mental Health Context | 15 |
| Research Ethics and Methodology | 15 |
| Value for Money and Budget Management | 10 |
| **Total** | **100** |

**Evaluation Process:**

1. Initial screening for compliance with basic requirements
2. Detailed evaluation by assessment panel
3. Possible interviews with shortlisted candidates
4. Reference checks for preferred candidate
5. Contract award

## 10. Conflict of Interest and Disclosure

Any potential conflict of interest between the researcher and Carlow County Development Partnership CLG, Carlow County Council, or their staff (including relatives or business relationships) must be fully disclosed in the tender response.

If any conflict of interest arises after submission but before contract award, it must be immediately communicated to the commissioning organisation.

Researchers must also declare any previous research or consulting work undertaken with Traveller organisations or relevant statutory bodies that might present a conflict of interest.

## 11. Data Protection and Freedom of Information

**Confidentiality:** Carlow County Development Partnership CLG will protect the confidentiality of any commercially sensitive information provided in tender submissions, subject to obligations under the Freedom of Information Act 1997 and FOI (Amendment) Act 2003.

**Sensitive Information:** If any information in the tender submission is considered commercially sensitive, the tenderer must clearly identify this information and specify the reasons for the sensitivity.

**Research Data:** All research data collected during the project must be managed in accordance with GDPR requirements. The researcher will be required to sign a data processing agreement and implement appropriate data security measures.

**Intellectual Property:** The copyright of the final research report and findings will remain with Carlow County Development Partnership CLG. However, the researcher may publish academic outputs based on the research, subject to agreement on timing and content.

## 12. Application Process and Requirements

Interested parties should submit their complete tender response and competency statement to:

**Annette Fox, Chief Executive Officer**
Email: afox@carlowdevelopment.ie

**Deadline:** No later than 5pm on Thursday, 4th September 2025

**Important Notes:**

* Late submissions will not be considered
* Tenders exceeding €20,000 (excluding VAT) will not be considered
* Completion dates after 30th January 2026 will not be considered
* Proof of tax compliance will be required as part of the application
* Electronic submissions only - no hard copies required

**Queries:**

Queries regarding this research tender will be accepted up to 5pm on Friday, 29th August 2025. All queries should be submitted in writing to afox@carlowdevelopment.ie.

Responses to substantive queries will be circulated to all potential tenderers to ensure fairness and transparency.

## 13. Contract Terms and Conditions

**Contract Award:**

* The successful researcher will be required to sign a formal research contract
* Contract award is subject to satisfactory Garda vetting clearance for all team members involved in data collection
* Evidence of appropriate professional indemnity insurance is required

**Payment Terms:**

* Payment will be made in stages linked to deliverable completion
* Final payment (30%) will be withheld until satisfactory completion of all deliverables
* VAT will be added where applicable

**Intellectual Property:**

* Research findings and reports will be the intellectual property of Carlow County Development Partnership CLG
* Researchers may use the research for academic publication with prior agreement

**Performance Standards:**

* The researcher will be expected to maintain regular communication with CCDP
* Any significant issues or delays must be reported immediately
* Quality standards must be maintained throughout the project

This research represents a significant opportunity to contribute to improved understanding and outcomes for the Traveller community in County Carlow. By placing specific focus on mental health, community wellbeing, and suicide prevention—alongside other key social and economic dimensions—this study seeks to provide a comprehensive, inclusive, and culturally informed analysis that will contribute to more effective policy, practice, and collaboration.

The research findings will be used to inform future programme development, service delivery improvements, and policy recommendations at both local and national levels. The successful researcher will be contributing to important work that has the potential to make a real difference to the lives of Traveller families and individuals in Carlow.