

Press release

Minister for Public Health, Wellbeing and the National Drugs Strategy announces increased funding of €500,000 for cocaine services

From [Department of Health \(/en/organisation/department-of-health/\)](/en/organisation/department-of-health/)

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The Minister for Public Health, Wellbeing and the National Drugs Strategy, Hildegard Naughton, has today announced increased funding of €500,000 for cocaine and crack cocaine services.

The announcement follows publication of the Health Research Board's report on the National Drug Treatment Reporting System (NDTRS) for 2022.

The NDTRS is the national surveillance system that records and reports on cases of drug and alcohol treatment in Ireland. The 2022 report shows that 12,009 cases were treated for problem drug use, up from 10,769 in 2021.

Minister Naughton said:

"The rise in numbers seeking treatment and the increased provision of treatment services demonstrates the government's commitment to a health response to drug use and the allocation of additional resources to support drug and alcohol services. There has been a concerted effort to expand services to meet the demand and I want to acknowledge the work of service providers, Drug and Alcohol Task Forces and individual projects throughout the country."

The report highlights cocaine as the most common problem drug reported in 2022. In recognition of this, Minister Naughton is allocating €500,000 in new development funding to expand the provision of community-based services for cocaine and crack cocaine in 2024.

The Minister added:

"It is essential that an appropriate response is put in place to meet the demand for treatment to meet new and emerging patterns of drug use. I am allocating the additional €500,000 secured in new development funding to expand community-based drug and alcohol services.

"This new funding will build on the cocaine-specific services that were funded last year with €850,000 being provided for four Community Healthcare Organisations (CHO) areas to deliver community-based responses, which included specific training for staff as well as supports to empower communities to tackle this issue.

"I now want to expand this provision to all areas, especially as the 2022 data shows a demand for cocaine treatment services in all 26 counties. Of particular concern is the 900 cases seeking treatment for crack cocaine. Crack cocaine can have a devastating effect on individuals, in particular women, and can exacerbate anti-social behaviour in communities."

The report also reveals that opioids were the second most common problem drug reported, followed by cannabis. The majority of those presenting for Cannabis treatment were aged 19 years or younger. Almost half of those who received treatment for problem drug use were parents of children under 17 years of age.

Minister Naughton continued:

"Enhancing access to, and the delivery of, drug and alcohol services in the community is a strategic priority under the national drugs strategy. It is vital that services are available to those who need them.

"I would urge anyone with concerns regarding their own drug use, or that of a family member or friend, to seek support from your GP, local services or contact the drug and alcohol helpline on 1800 459 459 which provides support, information and guidance for anyone with concerns."

Notes

Additional funding for community-based drug services in 2022

The Community Services Enhancement Fund (CSEF) was introduced in 2022, with a budget of €2 million, to enhance community-based drug and alcohol services under the National Drugs Strategy. Funding is aligned with the emphasis on enhanced community care in the Sláintecare reform programme, that shifts care into the community and closer to people's homes.

Over 50 community-based drug projects were funded under the CSEF across all CHOs.

HSE-led initiatives for cocaine and crack cocaine in 2022

The department provided €850,000 for initiatives for cocaine and crack cocaine in 2022. Funding of €200,000 was allocated to four CHOs - CHO 3, CHO 4, CHO 7 and CHO 9. It includes funding for two projects in Tallaght working with crack cocaine users, with a particular focus on women users.

The funding supported models of best practice in cocaine treatment. It also led to the establishment of targeted interventions in disadvantaged communities worst affected by cocaine and 'crack' cocaine.

While the evaluation has not been completed yet, it is clear that there is a lot of good work ongoing in these initiatives and a lot of people are accessing care for their problems associated with cocaine and 'crack' cocaine.

Additional funding for drug services in 2023

The Department of Health provided an additional €4 million to expand community and residential addiction services under the HSE national service plan 2023.

A further €3.5 million is provided to maintain existing level of service for community and voluntary providers of drug and inclusion health services.

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