

Reducing Harm, Supporting Recovery
National Oversight Committee (NOC)
Draft Minutes of the meeting of the 06th December 2019

Attendance:

Minister Catherine Byrne	Department of Health
Aine Hall	International Nurses Society on Addiction
Jim O'Driscoll	An Garda Síochána
Anna Quigley	Community Sector
David Bradshaw	National Family Support Network
Eileen Leahy	Department of Justice and Equality
Micheál Durcan	Regional Drug & Alcohol Task Force Coordinators Network
Caroline Jordan	TUSLA
Catherine Comiskey	Academic Expert
Colm Desmond	Department of Health
Devesh Singh	Department of Employment and Social Protection
David Kenny	The Probation Service
Eamon Keenan	HSE
Hamish Sinclair	Health Research Board
Hugh Greaves	Local Drug & Alcohol Task Force Coordinators Network
Martina Shaughnessy	Department of The Taoiseach
Mark Costello	UISCE
Michael Lacey	Regional Drug & Alcohol Task Force Chairs Network
Nicola Clavin	Department of Health
Paul Wynne	Revenue Commissioners
Randall Plunkett	Department of Health
Tony Duffin	National Voluntary Drug & Alcohol Treatment Sector
Pauline McKeown	National Voluntary Drug & Alcohol Treatment Sector
Aisling Gillen	TUSLA – Presenter
Cormac Judge	Department of Employment and Social Protection – Presenter
Sarah Waters	Department of Health Secretariat
Brian Dowling	Department of Health Secretariat
Anne Corr	Department of Health Secretariat
Karen O'Connor	Department of Health Secretariat

Apologies:

Marie-Clare Maney	Revenue Commissioners
Patrick Benson	Community Sector
Enda Kelly	Irish Prison Service
Margaret Nash	NVDATS, represented by Pauline McKeown
Ken Spratt	Dept of Transport, Tourism and Sport
Fergus McCabe	Voluntary Sector, represented by Anna Quigley
Bairbre Nic Aongusa	Dept of Rural & Community Development
William Flannery	Irish College of Psychiatrists
Neville Kenny	Dept of Education and Skills
Pat Carey	Local Drug & Alcohol Task Force Chairs Network
Paul Fay	Dept of Children & Youth Affairs
David Kelly	Dept of Housing, Planning & Local Government
Jim Walsh	Dept of Health

1. Minutes and Matters Arising

The minutes from 20 September 2019 were agreed with a minor amendment

Under item 3, the Community Sector (CS) requested a written update on the reviews of Task Forces being carried out by the HSE. The CS said they were not clear what their representation role was within the NOC and Standing Sub-Committee.

DOH provided updates on matters arising from September meeting.

CS had requested a copy of Terms of Reference for HSE Task Forces evaluations. A hardcopy was supplied at the meeting.

Action – circulate electronic copy.

CS requested a written update on the reviews of Task Forces being carried out by the HSE. Written update on Task Force reviews has been circulated to the NOC.

CS had requested an update on the implementation of the HSE Opioid Substitution Treatment National Clinical Guidelines. DPU stated that there is ongoing implementation of the OST National Guidelines. Specific progress has been made on non-direct supervision of urine drug testing and the HSE has been engaging with the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission on this. The HSE are hoping to shortly launch a Guidance Document of OST in the hospital setting. The Guidance Document will provide links to relevant sections of the OST Guideline with ancillary information for the in-patient setting.

The Department updated the Committee on the vacant post for a National Clinical Lead on Dual Diagnosis. Ministers Byrne and Daly met recently and sent a letter to the HSE to request action to fill the vacant post.

CS had requested an update on National Educational Psychologist Service posts and where they are located. A letter to Minister McHugh from Minister Byrne requesting this update was issued on 03/12/19.

Minutes from 16/09/19 meeting of the Early Warning Emerging Trends Sub-Committee were circulated to the NOC. Hugh Greaves from Local Drug and Alcohol Task Force Coordinators has become a member of the EWET Sub-Committee

2. Updates

Budget 2020

DOH updated the group regarding Strand 2 and 3 of the funding model announced by Minister Byrne in September 2019 which is a 36-month programme running from 2019 to 2022. In Strand 2, €190,000 in cumulative funding over 2019 to 2022 is being provided for each of 12 initiatives which were selected following a joint application process involving Drug and Alcohol Task Forces and HSE CHO's.

Strand 3 will provide funding for a national awareness campaign on the drug-related violence and intimidation reporting programme. The funding for the awareness campaign will be €40,000 in 2019, 2020 and 2021, and €20,000 for six months activity in 2022. The total allocation will be €140,000.

UISCE stated they were not consulted by Task Forces in relation to funding allocated in Strand 3.

The HSE advised that in November they were given 5 days to allocate an additional €600,000 before end of year. A summary of some beneficiaries of this funding was shared. CS queried if Task Forces had been consulted in allocating the funding. The HSE advised that areas would have been asked to identify priorities and some initiatives were for Task Forces.

Action - The HSE will circulate the list of the programmes funded within the €600,000.

Standing Sub-Committee

DPU provided an update on the 22/11/19 SSC meeting. Good governance and accountability of all partners in the delivery of the national drugs strategy was discussed at the meeting. Also discussed was an event organised by Citywide in October, where nine previous Ministers for Drugs criticised the implementation of the National Drugs Strategy. The Department of Health and other agencies were not made aware this event was taking place. The Department expressed its disappointment that Citywide felt it had to go outside of the established structures to voice their issues. There was broad agreement that the Terms of Reference of the SSC will be reviewed. DPU stated that they believe this can be worked out through discussion.

The Regional Drug & Alcohol Task Force Chairs Network representative stated they felt their voice was not being heard. The Task Force budgets have been cut and therefore they don't have the resources to meet the needs in the TF areas e.g. Limerick is one of the most deprived areas in Europe where there are huge issues of homelessness, ill mental health, use of crack cocaine, suicide and drug related intimidation. The RDATAFs feel the strategy is failing due to inadequate resources and can understand some breaking ranks.

The Community Sector stated they felt justified in their actions and no disrespect was intended to any member of the committees. CS said they wrote to DOH and the Minister on several occasions to raise their concerns. They feel decisions are not being made at the NOC and SSC. They believe their role and responsibility is to look after their networks by being fully involved in the decision-making process and to be part of key discussions.

The National Voluntary Drug & Alcohol Treatment Sector representative stated there is a definite need to review and strengthen the structures and terms of reference of both committees to include more engagement in decision making. A separate meeting could take place to carry out this work.

Minister Byrne said she would love to have a bigger budget for the implementation of the strategy, but that we are moving in the right direction with the funding increases in recent years. The Minister reiterated her commitment and support for the national drugs strategy. She stated she has listened to all input at the NOC meetings and believes partnership with all organisations is key, that communication and respect for each other should always be the way. The Minister wanted to make it clear that her appointment was made by the Taoiseach and she was offended and upset she wasn't informed the event, involving the nine former Ministers for Drugs, was to take place. The arena for talking is here at the NOC meetings, not in public.

The CS apologised if the Minister was offended, that there was no criticism directed personally at Minister Byrne. Their issue is with the decision making process and their desire for it to be more partnership based and they stand by that.

The RDATAFC network and the LDATFC network representatives enquired about the status of the working group for the review and update of the task force handbook. DPU advised that this work has been deferred due to a resourcing issue and it is in the 2020 business plan. The handbook is in the process of being compiled but needs further work. In the meantime the present handbook is to be used.

CS requested an update on the Performance Management System.

ACTION – DPU will circulate an update on the Performance Management System to the Committee.

National Drugs Forum

DPU gave an update on a successful NDF which took place in Croke Park Stadium on the 5th November 2019. Over 200 delegates attended this event and the theme of the Forum was 'Inclusion Health: Responding to complex health needs of people who use drugs'. A new group will meet next year to organise the 2020 NDF.

British Irish Council

DOH provided information about the British Irish Council, and a rundown of the 33rd British Irish Council Summit that was held in Farmleigh on the 14th and 15th of November. An Taoiseach hosted the heads of state and relevant health ministers from Scotland, Wales, Isle of Man, Jersey, Guernsey and the British Government. It was remarked at this meeting that this year is the 20th anniversary of the inaugural meeting of the British-Irish Council. This council, established as a result of the Good Friday Agreement offers ministers and officials regular opportunities to exchange information, discuss, consult and co-operate on matters of mutual interest within the respective competencies of the eight Member Administrations.

At the event Ministers agreed that the BIC continued to positively strengthen the links and relationships between the people of these islands, and it was mentioned that in the wake of Brexit, this council stands to play an important part in our future relationship with these administrations. Each administration chairs a work sector, environment, housing, etc. Ireland chairs the misuse of substances work sector, and this gave us a great opportunity to showcase some of the work we are doing in this area. The NEIC initiative, the inclusion health hub, and how they are transforming the delivery of health services was agreed to be the topic for discussion. A paper was written collaboratively between the HSE and the Dept on this initiative, the development of its story and services were included in the paper. The new Inclusion Health Hub in Summerhill was a key focus of the paper, and on the first evening Minister Byrne hosted the health ministers and officials from the other administrations as they visited the hub.

The next morning during the event, Minister Byrne and Minister Harris hosted their counterparts for a meeting to discuss this paper and the relevant experiences and expertise of the other administrations. There was great feedback noted for the work being carried out in the NEIC, especially the inclusion health hub, and the dedication of all who work there. Following this meeting, An Taoiseach, hosted the Administration Heads for the main summit meeting - where they briefly discussed this paper and the work sector, with Nicola Sturgeon noting that this work sector was the most important one in the BIC.

DOH advised that a communique that came from the event, and the video that was shown to the Ministers during their visit to the Inclusion health hub can be circulated if people are interested.

Early Warning Emerging Trends (EWET) Sub-Committee

DOH delivered an update on the EWET Sub-Committee meetings. The minutes from the 16/09/2019 meeting were circulated to the NOC on 04/12. The minutes of the December EWET meeting will be circulated to the NOC before the next meeting. The EMCDDA are due to issue operating guidelines for the European Union Early Warning System on new psychoactive substances shortly.

ACTION - These guidelines will be circulated to the NOC.

The UISCE representative felt that the input of a peer worker with lived experience on the EWET Sub-Committee would be useful. DOH advised there might be confidentiality issues in this regard and will discuss at the next EWET group meeting and revert.

ACTION – Medicines Unit to contact UISCE.

The Academic Expert advised the group that at the EMCDDA Scientific meeting they were informed that cannabis vaping and subsequent lung damage was implicated in 2,500 deaths in the USA. The HSE advised it had posted information on this on Drugs.ie in November.

Minister Byrne said Minister Harris will be bringing in legislation on vaping

3. Drug-Related Public Expenditure Analysis

Presentations were delivered to the Committee by TUSLA and the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection on drug related public expenditure.

Action – Circulate presentations to NOC

Following TUSLA's presentation, the CS asked if the names of the Child and Family Support Networks Coordinators could be circulated.

Action – TUSLA to circulate list.

Minister Byrne advised that the issue of the location of Family Resource Centres has been brought to her attention repeatedly. The feedback is they are not visible enough and sometimes they are in an estate and people don't feel they can go into that estate to attend the service. They could be accessed easier in village centres perhaps. The Chair said these centres are a great initiative and we need more of them.

Action – Dr Gillen will bring this issue back to TUSLA.

The discussion following the DEASP presentation noted the importance and value of the Community Employment Drug Rehabilitation Scheme. Minister Byrne raised the issue of the difficulty participants encounter once they have finished on the Scheme but noted that she has spoken to Minister Doherty to request the DEASP look at this issue. The Minister also noted how the Scheme gives people a reason to get out of bed and it changes lives.

The Department of Children and Youth Affairs and the Department of Education and Science were not in a position to attend and deliver presentations to the NOC. Hard copies of the emailed presentations were provided on the day to the NOC and were circulated by email on 09/12/2019.

4. Mid-term Review of Reducing Harm, Supporting Recovery

DPU informed the group that a mid-term review of the actions in the strategy will be conducted in 2020.

The ensuing points followed on from the discussion paper that was circulated;

- DPU informed the Committee that a progress review of the actions for 2019 would take place in Q1 2020 and that Departments and Agencies will receive a document to fill in
- DoH should consider an independent chair for the review group e.g. John Carr
- the review could be measurement and outcomes orientated, and also take note of processes that have been put into place to remedy delay in an action
- invite submissions from relevant agencies and sectors
- performance indicators require wider discussion
- set targets to reduce drug related deaths
- the status of the Resource Allocation Model

Action – DPU will revert to the RDATEC network representative regarding the RAM

5. Dates for 2020 NOC meetings

Friday 28 February

Friday 05 June

Friday 18 September

Friday 04 December

6. AOB

The RDATEC Coordinators network representative requested that a Task Force representative be appointed to the Public Health Alcohol Research Group through ICAN.

Action – DOH will revert with the relevant contact details

Minister Byrne thanked all the National Oversight Committee members for their commitment and support for the national drugs strategy and for their wisdom and guidance on the action in the strategy. The Minister thanked the staff from the Drugs Policy Unit in the Department. The Chair wished all every success in supporting the values of *Reducing Harm, Supporting Recovery* to reach their full potential while never forgetting the reason we are here is to help those people who struggle with addiction to recover and live their lives.

Date of next meeting Friday 28th February 2020 10.00 to 12.30 - Miesian Plaza