

Reducing Harm Supporting Recovery

National Oversight Committee

Thursday 3rd March 2022 at 2.30pm - from Room 5.22 and via Microsoft Teams

1 Introduction

Minister Feighan opened the meeting by welcoming everyone and in particular, new members. He said apologies had been received from Siobhán McArdle and Pat Bennett. He said that the next meeting of the group on 2nd June 2022 will take place in person.

The list of attendees is at Appendix 1.

2 Minutes and matters arising

Proposed amendments to the minutes had been received from Andy O'Hara, UISCE and Tony Duffin, NVDAS and these will be incorporated into the minutes. The revised minutes will then be circulated to the group.

The draft minutes were agreed subject to matters being amended.

With regard to matters arising, all matters referred to in the Actions Table from the previous meeting had been followed up and the Minister was happy with this.

3 Work Programme for NOC for the year including SIG chairs update

Minister Feighan said that the meeting in June will allow us discuss the initial drafts and Civil Society involvement with the Strategy. Jim Walsh discussed the work programme for the year. One group has met at a preliminary meeting and their actions will be presented to NOC in June and a final version soon afterwards. For September meeting, they will identify measures appropriate to their remit. Jim said he is aware that the Strategy is very focused on partnership and inclusion. Civil Society is very broad – it involves professional service providers, advocacy groups, etc. The Dept. wants to broaden this participation currently occupied by Citywide and

UISCE. It wants to enhance the interaction and engagement of Civil Society and to broaden the involvement in the structures – all being considered and elaborated on. In order to participate in the oversight structures of the Strategy, we will be circulating the paper early the next morning and would welcome peoples' thoughts on it.

Anna Quigley asked if the group would receive documents well in advance for the June meeting so that a meaningful discussion could take place. Ciara Pidgeon asked about the criteria and selection - she said the voice of children and young people would be valuable. Andy O'Hara asked for clarification around the criteria. He said community partners are nominated to be on NOC for good reason, who will make the decisions on who goes on it? John Bennett asked a question in relation to the work plan. He had a discussion with the Minister a while ago re Task Forces and he wondered where they would fit into the work programme.

Jim Walsh replied by saying there appears to be some confusion and that there is no intention to remove any of the existing networks from the NOC. While it created some anxiety, we are happy to have an engagement with the three existing groups. It was suggested that a meeting be arranged between DPU and the Task Forces within the next two weeks. Bríd Walsh asked if this could include the Regional Coordinators' Network and the Minister agreed to this. Anna Quigley pointed out that expressions of interest doesn't include members of NOC, it includes members of the SIGs.

Ciarán Reid thanked the Minister for the opportunity to chair SIG Group 4. An initial meeting of SIG Group 4 was held to set out codes of practice, etc. Each attendee was required to prepare a statement in advance of the meeting. Overall, it was a very positive initial meeting and there will be engagement with the Dept. of Education. Anna Quigley thanked Ciarán Reid. She asked how is the C&V sector represented at meetings of the SIGs – in advance of the Expressions of Interest being issued. Dairearca NíNéill said there was a slight delay in getting Civil Society members onto SIGs but that Expressions of Interest have not been issued yet. We will have members on each of the SIGs from the Civil Society Group as soon as possible. There was a very strong objection to this and Anna Quigley asked for it to be noted in the minutes. There are three people on NOC who could have been invited to attend. Andy O'Hara agreed with Anna and said he had some concerns about this. When Civil Society members are put on a Group, they need to be in a position to catch up. John Bennett complimented the Chair of the SIG. It sets a good tone for future work through regional structures that have been in place.

Gerry McCarney said, in relation to SIG 1, an email has been sent to all Group members and he hopes to organise a meeting in the next two weeks. He would welcome Civil Society members on the Group. Judge Ann Ryan apologised for being unable to attend the last meeting. She is glad to be at this meeting and is working behind the scenes with Jim Walsh, Dairearca NiNéill and Mary-Jane Trimble.

4. Citizens' Assembly on Drugs

Martina O'Shaughnessy, Dept. of An Taoiseach, gave a short presentation on Citizens' Assemblies in general. She discussed the establishment of two new Assemblies and said an inaugural meeting will take place in April this year. The Citizens' Assembly on Drug Use will follow these two Assemblies. The Minister expressed some disappointment that it couldn't be commenced in 2022 but said that we will commence preparation so that there is no delay in starting in 2023 with a report due to be published in Q4 2023. The first step will be to consult with NOC as the Group will have a huge input. The timeline will be coming up in the next few weeks. Andy O'Hara said we're all disappointed and reiterated what the Minister said. He said we need to be looking at a method of engagement. Anna Quigley wanted to clarify with Martina that the Citizens' Assembly was going ahead in early Autumn this year. She said a quorum was needed to discuss all of the important issues and there was a huge amount of knowledge and expertise out there. They had a good discussion on it at their Conference last November and it is really important that it happens this year. Prof. Catherine Comiskey asked how are people and agencies selected for the Citizens' Assembly as she would love to see education and research people involved. John Bennett asked what matters could be brought forward to be considered by the Assembly. Martina O'Shaughnessy said the aim is to get the goals established and the plan is to have this done before year end. We will be looking at a slightly different approach this year but she can check and revert with full details. Jim Walsh said there's an office in Dept. of An Taoiseach which organizes Citizens' Assemblies. He's going to meet with them shortly and can discuss NOC's ideas with them.

Dr. Bobby Smyth welcomed the fact that the Citizens' Assembly is on Drugs Use rather than Drugs Policy – the full range of drug problems in society will be covered. Jim Walsh said a Memo has been brought to Dáil Éireann. The Terms of Reference have been set out for the Citizens' Assembly and these will be discussed with Dept. of An Taoiseach. The Citizens' Assembly is an independent entity with an independent Chair, therefore it becomes an independent Forum.

5 Proposal for a REGULATION OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL on the European Union Drugs Agency

Jim Walsh wanted to bring this to the attention of the NOC. It's basically a proposal re Regulation of Parliament. The Group is already familiar with the work of the EMCDDA which has been in existence for over twenty years. This review is looking to expand the remit of the EMCDDA and to deliver more value for drugs policy. Among the issues are strengthening the forensic and toxicological information. Prof. Comiskey chairs the Scientific Committee. We will be discussing other Regulations at a European level if NOC members want to raise additional points. John Bennett said this looks very exciting. EMCDDA is an excellent organization and widely respected. Anna Quigley thanked Karen O'Connor for sending her some information on this. She also said well done to Prof. Catherine Comiskey and all her colleagues for their work in this area. Prof. Catherine Comiskey said as Chair of the Scientific Committee, they meet a couple of times a year. They prepared a position paper and the Agency needs to look more closely at polysubstance use. Co-ordination of research is currently funded through DG Justice and not Health. At the moment, inputs are being measured but it would be a huge benefit to look at outputs.

6. Update

a. New DoH funding programme- update

Brian Dowling presented on this topic. Minister Feighan announced a €2 million fund to enhance community-based drug and alcohol services on 22 December 2021, known as the Community Services Enhancement Fund (CSEF). It is important to note that the CSEF will complement the work of strategic priority Group 2 in enhancing access to and delivery of drug and alcohol services in the community in the national drugs strategy 2021-2025. From a policy perspective, CSEF has been informed by and is consistent with the population needs based approach in the Sláintecare Implementation Strategy and Action Plan 2021-2023 which underpins the fund.

Key elements

- Population based needs approach informed by evidence/research
- CHO's consult with Task Forces -feed into process- lived experience of service users taken into account.

- 25% funding ring fenced for social inclusion type initiatives- to increase access to and the provision of drug and alcohol services for women, ethnic minorities and the LGBTI+ community.
- CHOs delegated authority to administer the fund in their areas.

Current Progress

- The Dept has been working with HSE Social Inclusion services to develop guidelines for the administration of the Fund. Guidelines are aimed at CHOs and Drug and Alcohol Task Forces operating in a partnership model.
- The guidelines are currently being finalised
- It is intended to circulate them in the near future following finalisation of minor technical issues.

Process will be overseen by HSE/DOH/Expert Group to ensure consistency.

Eamon Keenan, HSE, sent his apologies for not attending the meeting and sent in a note in relation to this which was presented by Jim Walsh. In order to reduce the health harms of crack cocaine, a fund of €850,000 is being created on a recurring basis. This is very well advanced and they are looking at successful bids in the next two weeks. They should be expecting a good outcome overall.

b. Early Warning Emerging Trends Sub-Committee (EWET)

Anne-Marie Seymour presented on this topic. A EWET meeting had taken place on the previous Friday. There was an increase in CSD products and cannabinoids and a particular designer drug was discovered for the first time in Ireland. Synthetic cannabinoids are more common in student population. As society reopens, the prevalence of edibles, jellies, etc. has increased. The HRB has notified EMCDDA and has required an update.

c. Research sub-committee

Brian Galvin, HRB presented on this topic. The research sub-committee held their first meeting the previous week and Brian will send on a draft of the minutes of the meeting. Public health, psychology and criminology were the areas dealt with. It is important to use the data sources that are available as Brian explained there are very rich data sources in Ireland. For the next meeting,

they will invite staff from the Health and Research funding part of HRB. The funding for research needs to be aligned with strategic goals.

Andy O'Hara thanked Brian Galvin for his information. Brian undertook to talk in more detail to Andy about this.

d. UNCND

Karen O'Connor presented on this topic. The UNCND is happening during St. Patrick's week. A number of European Resolutions will be discussed. Dr. Eamon Keenan has been asked to speak at this forum and he will speak on naloxone. The Netherlands is leading on this in conjunction with the Pompidou Group. The timetable is not online yet but will be sent to NOC members when available.

Dates of next meetings

Minister Feighan thanked everyone for attending. The next meetings will be on 2nd June, 1st September and 1st December. The meeting on 2nd June will be an in-person meeting. All meetings will take place on Thursday afternoons at 2.30pm.

Appendix 1

Attendance

Minister Frank Feighan	Chair, Dept of Health
Jim Walsh	Dept of Health
Tadhg Fallon	Dept of Health
Brian Dowling	Dept of Health
Karen O'Connor	Dept. of Health
Susan McBride	Dept of Health
Mary-Jane Trimble	Dept. of Health
Anne-Marie Seymour	Dept. of Health
Dr. Basma Hasan (deputising for Dr. Devesh Singh)	Dept. of Social Protection
Aisling Sheehan	HSE
Brian Galvin	HRB
Asst. Commissioner John O'Driscoll	An Garda Síochána
Ciara Pidgeon	DCEDIY
<u>MB_Secretariat@education.gov.ie</u>	(for Tomás O'Ruairc)
Rosemarie Tobin	Dept. of Housing
Anna Quigley	Citywide
Ciaran Reid	Chair, SIG
Judge Ann Ryan	Chair, SIG
Dr. Sarah Morton	Chair, SIG
Dr. Gerry McCarney	Chair, SIG

Andy O'Hara

UISCE

tmccabe@dtcb.ie (for Dr. Fiona Fenton)

Chair, SIG

Prof. Catherine Comiskey

Ministerial Nominee

Brid Walsh

Regional Drug & Alcohol Task Force
Coordinators

Tony Duffin

Ana Liffey Drug Project

Dr. Bobby Smyth

Ministerial Nominee

John Bennett

Local Drug & Alcohol Task Force
Coordinators Network

DOH Secretariat

Dairearca NíNéill

Dept of Health

Fiona Conroy

Dept of Health

Gillian Treacy

Dept of Health

Sinead Carson

Dept of Health

Apologies

Siobhán McArdle

Dept. of Health

Pat Bennett

Chair, SIG

Dr. Eamon Keenan

HSE

Ben Ryan

Dept. of Justice