

***Reducing Harm, Supporting Recovery***  
**National Oversight Committee (NOC)**  
**Draft Minutes of the meeting of the 07<sup>th</sup> June 2019**

**Attendance:**

Minister Catherine Byrne	Department of Health
Aine Hall	International Nurses Society on Addiction
Andy Ogle	Regional Drug & Alcohol Task Force Coordinators Network
Angela Willis	An Garda Síochána
Anna Quigley	Community Sector
Anne Corr	Department of Health Secretariat
Ben Ryan	Department of Justice and Equality
Brian Dowling	Department of Health Secretariat
Brian Galvin	Presenter, Health Research Board
Caroline Jordan	TUSLA
Catherine Comiskey	Academic Expert
Devesh Singh	Department of Employment and Social Protection
David Kenny	The Probation Service
Eamon Keenan	HSE
Enda Kelly	Irish Prison Service
Eva Devanney	Policy & Communications Officer for National Voluntary Sector
Hamish Sinclair	Health Research Board
Hugh Greaves	Local Drug & Alcohol Task Force Coordinators Network
Jim Walsh	Department of Health
Joe Doyle	Presenter, HSE
John O'Driscoll	An Garda Síochána
Kevin Power	Department of Rural & Community Development
Karen O'Connor	Department of Health Secretariat
Margaret Nash	Voluntary Drug Treatment Network
María Otero Vazquez	UISCE
Michael Lacey	Regional Drug & Alcohol Task Force Chairs Network
Nicola Clavin	Department of Health
Patrick Benson	Community Sector
Paul Wynne	Revenue Commissioners
Peter Hogan	Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport
Randall Plunkett	Department of Health
Sadie Grace	National Family Support Network
Sarah Waters	Department of Health Secretariat
Tony Duffin	Voluntary Drug Treatment Network

**Apologies:**

Siobhan O'Halloran	Department of Health
Fergus McCabe	Voluntary Sector, represented by Anna Quigley
Neville Kenny	Department of Education and Skills
Marie-Clare Maney	Revenue Commissioners, represented by Paul Wynne
Vivian Geiran	The Probation Service, represented by David Kenny
William Flannery	Irish College of Psychiatrists
Alan Wall	Dept of Education and Skills
Íde Delargy	Irish College of General Practitioners
Ken Spratt	Dept of Transport, Tourism and Sport, represented by Peter Hogan
Bairbre Nic Aongusa	Dept of Rural & Community Development, represented by Kevin Power
Brid Walsh	Regional Drug and Alcohol Task Force Coordinators Network, represented by Andy Ogle
Pat Carey	Local Drug & Alcohol Task Force Chairs Network
Clare McNamara	Department of Children & Youth Affairs
Mary Hurley	Dept of Housing, Planning & Local Government
Kate O'Flaherty	Department of Health

## **1. Minutes and Matters Arising**

The minutes from 07 June 2019 were agreed without amendment.

### **Matters Arising**

Documents relating to matters arising at previous meeting circulated to NOC on 31/05/19:

- Update on Supervised Injecting Facility
- Update on spent convictions
- Update on dual diagnosis programme
- SSC workplan schedule of dates and thematic meetings
- SSC minutes 05/03/2019
- SSC minutes 17/04/2019

DOH provided updates on matters arising from January meeting.

Supervised Injecting Facility – DOH met with Merchants Quay. A pre-planning meeting was held with Dublin City Council with the further documents requested by DCC. The DCC decision will be issued in July.

There was a query in relation to the Interdepartmental Group on Community Employment Schemes. Minister Byrne said she has already spoken with Minister Doherty regarding this matter.

An update on Nurse Prescribing of Opioid Substitution Treatment in relation to action 2.1.14 of RHR was requested. Minister Byrne apologised for the lack of an update on the Nurse Prescribing issue and advised that DOH will follow up on this again with the Nursing Policy Unit.

The question of pay restoration for voluntary workers in the drugs treatment sector was raised. The Chair advised that as pay restoration is a HSE HR issue, DOH will get a response from the HSE on this.

Concerns regarding the vacant Clinical Lead post for the Dual Diagnosis Programme were raised. DOH stated that the Dual Diagnosis Programme is a very specific programme, there has been progress on a significant number of points including a further €1 million to fund services. The Chair advised that she would write to Paul Reid, Director General of the HSE regarding the post of Clinical Lead for the Dual Diagnosis Programme.

## **2. Updates**

### **Working Group (WG) on the alternative approaches to the possession of drugs for personal use**

DOH informed the Committee that the WG report outlines recommendations for policy options which are now under consideration. The next step will be to bring a Memorandum for Government with the Department of Justice and Equality, to Cabinet in July.

### **Re-establishment of Early Warning Emerging Trends (EWET) Sub-Committee**

The EWET Sub-Committee comes under Action 3.3.38(a) of the strategy and is one of the structures supporting implementation of RHR. The first meeting of the re-constituted committee took place last Tuesday. The Department of Health's Medicines Unit (MU) are chairing the committee and the next meeting of the committee will take place in September.

The LDATF Co-ordinator's representative said the Drug Task Forces provide reports each year and the information in the reports is under-utilised. MU suggested that LDATF Co-ordinator could join the EWET Sub-Committee.

### **3. Review of Progress Plan 2018 & Planned Activity 2019 – Update by Standing Sub-Committee (SSC)**

DOH informed the group the SSC met in April and May and a number of robust discussions took place. In relation to action 5.1.19, to undertake a study on rehabilitation outcomes, the academic expert queried why this study has not been carried out. It was explained that funding to carry out the General Population Survey 2018/2019 was prioritised. This research is due to be completed later this year. DOH will then discuss with the HRB how best to utilise the budget in 2020, including the possibility of progressing this action from RHR.

RDATF Chairs Network representative said that Drug Related Intimidation (DRI) was off the agenda. DOH advised this was not the case and re-iterated the importance of having DRI as standing item on every SSC meeting agenda. The action from the strategy to review the DRI reporting programme has been completed by An Garda Síochána and the National Family Support Network and they have jointly agreed on a number of actions to strengthen the programme. DPU met with AGS and the NFSN. A separate stream of funding of €140,000 over three periods is being made available for initiatives that address DRI. The Department of Health (DOH) will circulate the report by An Garda Síochána and the National Family Support Network of the review of the UCC evaluation of the National Drug-Related Intimidations Reporting Programme.

Action 2.1.15 - The Community Sector (CS) requested an update on the HSE National Clinical Guidelines with regard to Opioid Substitution Treatment. The CS said they were not clear where they fit in with the HSE evaluations and requested a copy of the Terms of Reference.

### **4. Drug Related Public Expenditure (DRPE) – analysis by the Health family**

DOH informed the committee that collecting DRPE data is a requirement for the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA) for comparison among EU countries, provides an evidence base for policy decisions about resource allocation and encourages policy reform.

The DOH, HSE and HRB delivered presentations on their drug-related expenditure returns to the EMCDDA focusing on the overall trends of expenditure from 2016 to 2019. These presentations were circulated to the NOC on 10/06/2019

Gambling addiction;

RDATF Chairs Network representative stated that gambling is considered an addiction and is being dealt with continually within their services. DOH advised that it is not included under drug expenditure and we have no specific remit to deal with gambling within drugs policy. Minister Byrne is speaking to Minister Flanagan regarding this area. DJE said that Minister of State Stanton is very interested in this area and is doing a lot of work with other Departments.

A discussion in relation to expenditure clarified what was captured in the data:

- social impact is not included, e.g. years lost, employment
- alcohol is not included as it is a licit drug, nor are prescribed drugs
- range of other factors across a range of funding streams crossing over each other e.g. homeless/insecure housing, one heading does not capture the full picture
- Task Force staff salaries not included in the calculations.

DOH highlighted the importance of being transparent about drug related expenditure. It can help to inform and illustrate the direct spending by the state and the effort being put in to tackle drug misuse and addiction. If we have good data, e.g. between CHOs, better decisions can be made.

### **5. European Drug report 2019 – Implications for Ireland**

The Health Research Board (HRB) delivered a presentation on the European Drug Report, published 06<sup>th</sup> June 2019, and its implications for Ireland.

The most recent Irish household General Population Survey, estimating the prevalence of drug use in Ireland was undertaken in 2015. A new General Population Survey 2018/2019 is currently being conducted and the results of this will be published in 2020.

The HRB gave an overview of the findings from the report on cocaine, drug related deaths, cannabis, opioids (mainly heroin) and new psychoactive substances. The following discussion took place after the presentation;

➤ **Cocaine**

The NVDAS representative highlighted that the cost of crack cocaine has plummeted from €50 to €25 a rock. Members of the NVDAS note the concerning phenomena of men and women with a history of using cocaine/crack cocaine dying by suicide. There was a particular concern with regard to women dying by suicide, even though many of the women have children which is usually a protective factor for them. They also note that women and men are presenting in psychiatric wards due to attempted suicides after using cocaine and asked if other members of the NOC noted such phenomena.

➤ **Cannabis**

The NFSN advised that the age children start using cannabis has gotten younger and at the same time the potency has increased.

➤ **Drug Related Deaths**

The Academic Expert told the group a student of hers, from the Faculty of Health Sciences, with the HRB, analysed 20 years of data research on Aging and Substance Misuse. The analysis found that drug related deaths have increased and the average duration of drug use before entering treatment is seven years whereas previously it was two years. There were concerns raised regarding the ageing drug user population and that we should be thinking about the over 35's and the services they require.

DOH said that it was good to see the Irish situation in relation to the European aspect and instructive to see how challenging and dynamic the drug market is, referred to in the report as "uberisation of the drug trade". Drug related deaths, especially from opioids, emphasises the importance of the Supervised Injecting Facility.

**AOB**

- Committee members requested that the minutes of the NOC meetings be expedited and updates on matters arising from the meeting be circulated well in advance of the next meeting along with any presentations.
- RDATAF Chairs representative advised that there is still an issue with Local Authorities not attending Task Forces meetings and asked if there is any pressure that can be applied to make that happen.
- NVDAS restated its support for an interagency response to the issue of Dual Diagnosis and requested an update on the response to the issue and also specific feedback relating to the CE Drug Rehabilitation Programme, if it is being moved out of the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection and why was membership of the interdepartmental group, that was set up to explore this question, closed to the NVDAS.
- DOH advised a date for the launch of the HRB evidence review and seminar on dual diagnosis will be confirmed shortly.
- RDATAF Chairs Network representative said that Drogheda interagency groups which include the drugs and addiction services are looking for funding to help deal with the issues surrounding the escalating feud between two drug gangs in the area including drug related intimidation.

- The HSE advised that it is looking to develop additional services for Drogheda in the areas of harm reduction, treatment service and needle exchange.
- An Garda Síochána (AGS) representative (head of Special Crime Operations) informed the Committee that the AGS has sent additional recruits to areas such as Drogheda. Huge resources are being put in to fighting organised crime and the Garda National Drugs and Organised Crime Bureau, which is the section of AGS tasked with investigation of Organised Crime and Drug Trafficking, has taken in €8 million alone in cash and drugs seizures.
- Minister Byrne re-iterated that she has huge respect for the work being carried out by AGS and how important it is to acknowledge the work being done and how it is spreading out into community policing. The Minister visited the Criminal Assets Bureau last year and saw first-hand all the work being done. She stated that she is awaiting the outcome of the planning permission request for the Supervised Injecting Facility.
- The Community Sector said that policing response to the drug situation is crucial as young people are dealing and taking drugs and it is entrenched in their community. It is crucial that services intervene at that level and important that services are investing in these young people on the ground and on an ongoing basis.

#### Up-coming Events

DPU confirmed the National Drug Forum 2019 will take place on November 5<sup>th</sup> in Croke Park.

The first regional workshops for Drug & Alcohol Task Forces & CHO's in relation to the application process for Strand 2 of the additional €1m available for the implementation of the National Drugs Strategy will commence next week.

**Date of next meeting 20<sup>th</sup> September 2019  
10.00 to 12.30 - Miesian Plaza**