

Drug Task Force Community Representatives

The overall objective of having Community Representatives on Drug Task Forces is to ensure that the work of the Task Forces is based on and informed by:

- the reality of drug use and how it impacts on our communities and
- the need to identify the most appropriate, relevant and timely responses for those communities.

Overall Role of a Drug Task Force Community Representative is:

- To bring the benefit of your own local knowledge and experience of the drugs issue to the Task Force.
- To act as a representative on behalf of the community at the Task Force.

Your role in the community

- To provide information to the community on the work of the Task Force.
- To organise and facilitate discussion and debate in the community.
- Provide feedback to the Task Force from the community discussion and debate.

The Supports you need for this role

- ✓ A Structure in the community to allow you to feedback information and to identify issues; this can happen through an existing community network or may require a new networking group to deal specifically with the drugs issue. The key principle is that there should be a structure in place that is open to everyone in the community that has an interest in the drugs issue and that wants to participate.
- ✓ Shared responsibility with the Task Force and other community people; community reps are not responsible on their own for ensuring there is a community feedback structure in place, your Task Force and other local community groups also have a role to play.
- ✓ Shared responsibility with other Task Force members for the work of the Task Force; all Task Force members are in place to facilitate a more effective response to the drug problem in your area.

Your role in the Task Force

- Actively participate in full Task Force meetings and sub-group or Working Groups.
- Ask questions if there is any issue that you are not clear about or if you need more information.
- Go through the documentation that is circulated in advance of Task Force meetings.
- Meet in advance of all Task Force meetings with the other community representatives on your Task Force to develop common objectives and approaches on behalf of the community.

The Supports you need for this role

- ✓ Administration and office facilities
- ✓ Email and social media access
- ✓ Technical assistance and training
- ✓ Expenses

Criteria for Community Representatives

- Live in the area from which they are nominated;
- Are fully committed to the aims and objectives of the DTF;
- Are able to give an undertaking of the necessary time commitment to carry out the role effectively;
- Have a track record of involvement in the local community;
- Have knowledge and experience of local drug issues either through personal experience, involvement in local community or working in a drugs project.



Guidelines for Community Representatives

- Community representatives are **not** members of the Task Force as individuals.
- They are **not** there to represent the interests of any particular organisation.
- Community reps are nominated as people who can represent the interests of the wider community (through whatever kind of community structure/network is in place in your community). Their role, therefore, is to bring the view of the wider community to the Task Force and to keep their community informed on the Task Force's work.
- Ideally nominations should be for at least two years and are usually subject to review by the Community Network after that time period.
- In situations where a person selected as a community rep is also either a worker or Board member of a project that is funded by the Task Force, he/she should be made aware of the standard conflict of interest procedures that apply i.e. when funded project is being discussed the community rep declares his/her interest and absents him/herself from discussions (as applies with Councillors on Local Authorities and in other state bodies.)

Communities of Interest

In addition to area-based communities, there may also be communities of interest, who can play an important role in the work of the Task Force and their participation should be facilitated. Communities of interest may include:

- Family Support Networks
- Travellers
- Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender (LGBT) Groups
- New Communities
- Homeless
- Prisoners
- Sex workers

Each Task Force agrees locally or regionally how groups representing communities of interest will participate in the work of the Task Force, taking into account the extent to which the problems involving these client groups impact on the specific area.