

Citywide Drugs Crisis Campaign



ANNUAL REPORT 2018



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Introduction

Citywide Drugs Crisis Campaign is a national network of community organisations that are involved in addressing the drugs issue and we represent the community sector on the National Committees of the National Drugs Strategy (NDS).

Set up in 1995 by the Inner City Organisations Network (ICON), to bring together Dublin communities that were struggling with the heroin crisis, we now work nationally linking communities across the country dealing with a range of substance issues.

We work to promote and support a community development approach to the drugs problem - this means involving the people who are most affected by the problem in dealing with the problem - drug users, their families and communities.

Aims

- To provide ongoing support, training and networking to local projects and activists working on the drugs issue.
- To promote and support an inter-agency response to the drug problem, including government departments and agencies, trade unions, community and voluntary bodies.
- To campaign and lobby for national drugs policies that recognise inequality and disadvantage as an underlying cause of community drugs problems and reflect and respond to the reality on the ground.
- To represent the community sector on national policymaking bodies as part of the government's National Drugs Strategy.

The 2018 Citywide Work Plan consisted of three objectives:

- 1: Support, develop and facilitate the involvement of communities in the, structures, the implementation of the NDS.
- 2: Ensure that the experience of communities in dealing with and responding to the drugs crisis forms part of the policymaking process through a partnership approach
- 3: To increase general awareness of the drugs crisis and campaign on relevant issues

This report provides a summary of how we reached those objectives during 2018

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Objective 1: Facilitating involvement in the National Drugs Strategy.

DATF Community Reps

Citywide facilitates the Drug and Alcohol Taskforce (DATF) Community Representatives Network by bringing people together to support each other, exchange information and to identify key policy issues and develop responses. During 2018, Citywide:

- Community Reps**
- Met with both the Regional DATF Community Reps network and the Local DATF Community Reps network.
 - Held a joint meeting of Local and Regional DATF Community Reps in December to review progress of the NDS and invited the Principal Officer of the Drugs Policy Unit to attend to discuss issues with the reps. This meeting also included presentations and discussion on key policy issues - **Pavee Point Drugs & Alcohol Programme** gave an input on the engagement of Travellers in NDS, **Alcohol Action Ireland** gave a presentation on progress and difficulties in the implementation of Public Health Alcohol Act and **Merchants Quay Ireland** gave an overview of how the Supervised Injecting Facility would operate in MQI and updated the reps on the objections to planning for the site.
 - Went out to meet with Community Reps in the following Regional Drug and Alcohol Task Force areas: **East Coast** (Wicklow), **North East** (East Cavan, Louth, Meath and Monaghan), **North West** (Donegal, Leitrim, Sligo, West Cavan), **Western** (Galway, Mayo and Roscommon), **Southern** (Cork & Kerry), Midlands (Laois, Longford, Offaly and Westmeath), **South East** (Carlow, Kilkenny, Tipperary South, Waterford and Wexford). And in Local Drugs Alcohol Task Force areas: Ballyfermot, Ballymun, Blanchardstown, Bray, Clondalkin, Canals, Cork, Dublin North East, Finglas/Cabra, North Inner City, South Inner City
 - Produced a DATF community reps resource pack which brought together information on the DATFs, the role of Community reps, the national Drugs strategy and Citywide. Copies of these packs have been delivered to all community reps.
 - Represented the Community Sector on the National Structures and has attended all meetings of the NOC and SSc in 2018.

Drug Rehabilitation Projects, Community Drugs Projects

In May 2018, Citywide held a seminar to discuss the increasing problem of benzo/tablet and crack cocaine use and to look at how Community Drug Projects were responding to emerging issues in their communities. Attendees came from Community Drugs Projects across the country. Prior to the seminar Citywide surveyed the projects to identify the scale of the problem and the responses developed locally. The findings of this survey were outlined for the seminar.

Four case studies were presented to the seminar from projects who have developed responses:

Mental health/dual diagnosis - a cross task force initiative involving two LDATF's, one RDATF, HSE Addiction Service and local partner psychosocial services.

Harm reduction for crack cocaine use - fixed site crack pipe distribution alongside needle and syringe exchange programme and street-based outreach including crack pipe distribution and needle and syringe exchange programme.

Benzo/tablet use - one projects approach to supporting and responding to the needs of people who are using prescription drugs problematically.

Harm reduction for young people - a community drugs project collaborating with a local youth project on mental and physical health programmes designed to reduce harm.

The Saol project also gave an overview of the updated '**Reduce the Use**' programme; originally designed in 2007 for cocaine use, Reduce the Use 2 in 2011 was updated for poly-drug use and the 2018 version is poly-drug in context - bringing the context of drug use into focus (poverty, trauma, homelessness, violence, social capital etc)

Feedback from the May seminar fed into a TOR for a more detailed piece of work to highlight best practice in delivering a community development approach in responding to community drugs problems. Dr Aileen O'Gorman is conducting this piece of work and the report will be launched in 2019.

The Drugs Rehab Projects network met in April to discuss a wide variety of implementation problems arising across different regions. Citywide intervened with DSP on individual issues. The DSP Stakeholders group was not convened in 2018. As a result, Citywide has raised the issues reported by the Projects directly with DSP and other appropriate statutory agencies.

Objective 2: Linking to Policy

During 2018 Citywide:

Supporting

- Met with a group from **Belfast** who are developing a community response to the drugs issues in their area.
- Made a presentation to the **World Conference on Community Development** on the subject of 'Community Development and the NDS'.
- Worked with three community groups (Blanchardstown, North Inner City, Rialto/South Inner City) in developing **Community Impact Assessment Tool**.
- Made a presentation at the **conference launching the Clondalkin LDATF Strategic Plan** and attended 2 further meetings re implementation of the Plan.
- Provided input on accredited **Community Development Course in Clondalkin**.
- Presentation on the **NDS and Women** at **Ballyfermot LDATF** seminar on March 9th
- Provided an input on **NDS and Women** at **East Coast RDATEF** community event to mark International Women's Day.
- Participated in **Community Awareness event** organised by Canals LDATF

Communities of Interest

During 2018, Citywide:

Liaising

- Worked with New Communities Partnership, Cairde and Voice of New Communities Drugs and Alcohol Network on the engagement of Black and ethnic minority organisations/groups with Community Drugs Projects. Examples of 'connectors' were identified as models of good practice; a report was published by Citywide in the beginning of 2019.
- Continued ongoing liaison with BeLong To Drug and Alcohol Service on specific issues relating to LGBTI young people.
- Continued regular contact and meetings with Pavee Point Drugs Specific Service in relation to Traveller drug issues and co-operation on the structures of the NDS.
- Continued liaison and meetings with NFSN around supporting participation of family members on Task Forces. The Family Support Network was invited to be a member of our sub group to look at addressing stigma experienced by people who use drugs.
- Had regular contact and meetings with UISCE in relation to Service User issues and cooperation on the structures of the NDS

European Union Representation

Citywide has successfully re-applied to be a member of EU Civil Society Forum and attended the both plenaries of the 2018-2020 CSF. During 2018, Citywide:

Representing

- Participated in the meetings of the Working Group on Civil Society participation in the EU Drugs Strategy.
- Regular contact with IDPC in relation to preparation for the 2019 Ministerial Segment of UNGASS.
- Liaised with EU CSF members on preparation of country reports.
- Participated in a Europe-wide survey on the EU Action Plan on Drugs.



Objective 3: Campaigning

Decriminalisation of possession of drugs for personal use

During 2018, Citywide:

Organised a press event on June 25th to highlight the call for submissions to the consultation on decriminalisation of possession of drugs for personal use. The event was addressed by a number of speakers who are publicly engaged in the debate and resulted in significant coverage by the media and a number of follow-up media interviews.

Formally launched the Citywide Decriminalisation Evidence Base Website:

<https://www.citywide.ie/decriminalisation/>

Produced and circulated a [FAQ information leaflet on decriminalisation of drug use](#) which aims to answer the most commonly asked questions in relation to decriminalisation for personal possession or use of illicit drugs.

Made a submission to the [Working Group on Alternative Approaches to Criminalisation](#) at the request of the Chairperson Garrett Sheehan.

Participated as a panel member and presented at a number of public meetings and events including:

- Public meeting held by Senator Aodhán Ó Ríordáin in Donnycarney.
- Town Hall events organised by ALDP and LSE.
- Presentation at the SSDP national conference in Cork in April.
- A debate on TV3 with Philly McMahon and Dr Bobby Smyth.
- Public meeting organised by Social Democrats in Rialto

Stop the Stigma

Stop the Stigma campaign was launched on Feb 27th 2018 at an event in the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission. The campaign was launched by Minister Catherine Byrne. Charlie Lloyd from York University outlined the research conducted into the impact of stigma on people who use drugs.



The event featured testimonies from women from the SAOL project on their personal experience of stigma, there was a short performance of the Peter Sheridan produced play 'Love in the Wild' and the event ended with a performance by the participants of RADE.

The campaign centred around five things we can do to begin to break down stigma, to shift attitudes and to treat people who use drugs with respect and dignity.



1. Start by changing our language.

We can stop using the offensive word "junkie". We can then begin to name check the other words that are used, often without even thinking, to label, reject and put down people who use drugs.

2. Challenge stigma in delivery of services.

We can engage with health care and frontline staff to develop education and training programmes to challenge the stigma that people who use drugs can experience in public services.

3. Support stronger and better-resourced community drug programmes.

We can provide well-resourced Community Drug Projects and services to support people who use drugs, their families and communities.

4. Understand more about the complexity of addiction.

We can provide political leadership to ensure that public discourse is informed by greater knowledge and understanding of addiction, dependency and recovery so that fear and blame of people who use drugs are reduced.

5. End the criminalisation of people who use drugs.

We can provide the evidence to inform the Working Group on Alternative Approaches so that it can implement the recommendation of the Oireachtas Joint Committee on Justice, Defence and Equality to deal with possession of drugs for personal use through a harm reducing and rehabilitative approach.

Campaign Materials

The campaign materials include: posters, information leaflet, a campaign evidence document, a short video and a microsite: www.stopthestigma.ie A short [position document](#) was produced based on findings from four key research sources:

1. A qualitative exploration of the experience and impact of stigma on people who use drugs undertaken in collaboration with six community-based Drug Rehab Projects (DRPs) and their participants in the summer of 2017
2. The results of a Red C poll conducted in 2016 on behalf of Citywide to assess public attitudes towards drug use and people who use drugs¹
3. The summary of research evidence and expert findings of the UK Drug Policy Commission (UKDPC) stigma research ‘Sinning and Sinned Against: The Stigmatisation of Problem Drug Users’ 2010²
4. Doctoral Thesis, Laura O’Reilly ‘Stigma & Identity: an exploration of drug use in West Dublin, TCD 2014. This study involved thirty-three research participants who had a current or former history of drug use.

A social media campaign was developed to ask to the public to consider the damage that stigmatising a person for using drugs can do. Materials were distributed through our networks to projects and DATFs across the country.

Citywide met with the Press Ombudsman to discuss the issue of stigma in printed media and was asked to make a presentation to a conference on media representation of minority communities held by Irish Press Council and Press Ombudsman in October.

Briefing Politicians

In April 2018 we produced a briefing paper for TDs and Senators on key issues for the implementation of the NDS:



1. Allocate an **emerging needs fund** to support the work of local Community Drug Projects across the country to respond to current and emerging service gaps
2. **Pass the Public Health (Alcohol) Bill** without any further delay
3. Give a mandate to each Local and Regional Drugs and Alcohol Task Force to develop a **three-year action** plan that sets out how the 50 NDS actions will be implemented in their area
4. Appoint a **senior official from the Taoiseach's Department** to ensure direct accountability of all agencies for their active participation in implementing the new NDS
5. Put in place a **Community Development Programme** to support the real and meaningful community participation in the NDS
6. Appoint **Citywide as members of the Working Group on Alternative** Approaches to possession of drugs for personal use, based on its track record of leading out on this issue
7. Use a **partnership approach** to the design and development of the new scheme proposed for young people and involve young people from the target group directly in the partnership
8. As a matter of urgency bring together all the relevant stakeholders to develop an **action plan on drug-related intimidation**

During 2018 meetings took place with spokespersons on drugs from all political parties/groupings. Transcripts from the PQs and Dáil statements relating to DATFs and the NDS were circulated to all our networks and key issues highlighted.