

The Fergus McCabe Memorial Summer School 2025

A Community Development Approach to Drugs – Why it's still needed
30 years of Citywide Drugs Crisis Campaign

Community Drug Projects: Responding to drug-related harms

Aileen O'Gorman

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Community Drug Projects:

Aileen O’Gorman

**Responding to drug-related harms
from a community development approach**

- **Community drug problems are shaped by policies that create ‘risk environments’ for drug-related harms.**
- **Policies that result in high concentrations of low-paid, insecure jobs and unemployment; educational disadvantage; health, housing and income inequalities; and inadequate services in working class communities.**
- **These policy-related harms = structural violence by the state that prevents people from having their fundamental human needs met.**



Community Drug Projects:

Aileen O’Gorman

**Responding to drug-related harms
from a community development approach**

- **Community Drug Projects play a vital role in supporting the people, families and communities affected by drugs.**
- **Their work is informed by community development principles of equality and social justice.**
- **They recognise that drug problems are inseparable from broader structural and systemic problems.**
- **... but they work in an increasingly hostile policy environment that refutes the value of their approach.**

Five core practices of Community Drug Projects

1. Provide accessible, inclusive, and safe spaces
2. Deliver trauma informed care
3. Facilitate participation and integration
4. Respond to unmet and emerging needs
5. Act collectively: through interagency and partnership work

Challenges

Hard to measure the human impact, hard to quantify the level of good interventions

They're saying what are you doing is wrong ... are we getting value for money?, and they're expecting you to do more and more and more for the same or considerably less funding ... nothing we did was right

we get asked what's your success rate – what are the outcomes – everything is geared towards this aim of getting the Methadone down - everyone is looking for this alleluia moment where everyone walks out drug free and you're trying to explain that it's not for everybody

we never ask people to leave, they leave when they're ready, and research supports that, policy doesn't – they encourage us to have people in, sorted, and out. Keep moving them through.

Thanks for listening
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