

Citywide Briefing Document on the Role of Drug & Alcohol Task Force Community Representatives



The overall objective of having Community Representatives on Drug & Alcohol 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 DATF 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 by bringing the view of the wider community to the DATF and by keeping the community informed of the DATF work
- To assist the development of policies/services based on a perspective gained from your involvement in community-based services on the ground

Criteria for Community Representatives

- Live in the area from which they are nominated;
- Are fully committed to the aims and objectives of the DATF;
- 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.
- Have appropriate and adequate geographic spread of representation for the overall Task Force area.

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.
- ✓ Support from the Task Force in providing information to the community on the work of the Task Force e.g. through community newsletters and in organizing and facilitating community meetings.
- ✓ Having a Community Report as a Standing item on the agenda at all Task Force meetings; this ensures that there is adequate time at meetings for discussion of community issues.

Your role in the Task Force

- Go through the documentation that is circulated in advance of Task Force meetings (the Task Force should ensure that all documentation relevant to the meeting is circulated to members in advance to allow adequate time for discussion and consultation)
- 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.
- Take responsibility for providing a Community Report for each Task Force meeting.
- 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.

The Practical Supports you need for this role

- ✓ Access to administration and office facilities
- ✓ Email and social media access
- ✓ Technical assistance and training where needs are identified
- ✓ Expenses, including care arrangements (i.e. childcare, carers role)



Working as a group of Community Reps.

As a Community Representative you are not a member of the Task Force as an individual and you are not there to represent the interests of any particular organisation. It is important that Community Representatives work together as a group on behalf of the broader community.

Community Reps meet as a group in advance to prepare for the Task Force meeting.

- Review any issues arising from the previous meeting
- Agree on issues that you want to raise and who will raise them
- Agree what outcomes you would like to achieve from discussion of the issues at Task Force
- Identify any information about community issues that needs to be circulated in advance of the Task Force meeting and where necessary agree input from the community sector.

Ideally nominations should be for at least two years and are usually subject to review by the Community Network after that time period. The Community Network is free to nominate new reps who meet the criteria or to re-nominate existing Community Reps to continue the role.

Community Representatives should work with the Community Network and the Task Force to ensure that there are no gaps in community representation and the all places are filled.

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.