TF NEWS

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Mission Statement:

To reduce the harm caused by substance misuse through the concerted focus on:
Supply Reduction
Education
Prevention
Treatment
Rehabilitation
Research

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As Chairperson of the Western Region Drug and Alcohol Task Force (WRDATF), I am delighted to welcome you to the summer edition of the TF News which is packed with up-to-date information on projects being carried out by the WRDATF funded workers and staff.

Earlier this year, it was my great pleasure to welcome a large audience to the very insightful conference: ‘Broadening the Debate: Family Support in the context of Substance Abuse’ which was held in the Institute for Lifecourse and Society, NUI, and where the Family Support Needs Analysis Report was launched.

The Task Force recognises the needs of family members and it welcomes the fact that this document offers insight into the problems regarding substance use in the family. Chaired by Professor Pat Dolan, joint founder and Director of the UNESCO Child and Family Research Centre NUI and with such esteemed speakers as Ms Vivienne Evans, Chief Executive of Adfam UK; Ms Nora Gibbons, Independent Chairperson of Tusla, and Mr David McPhillips, Team leader with the Community Substance Misuse Team in the Mid-West on the panel, the conference provided the opportunity for us to debate the issues and to look for shared solutions.

The training calendar has been a huge success and there has been a great response to it again this year with an even broader range of participants including: Youth Sector, Homeless Services, Tusla, An Garda Siochána, Housing, Hospitals, Traveller Projects, Mental Health Services, Disability Services, Prison, University, Defence Forces, private therapists, teachers and student placements.

Once again I am delighted to announce the 2015 WRDATF Regional Awareness Week which will take place from November 9 -13.

Martin Lee, Chairperson

2015 WRDATF Training Programme

Over the last two-and-a-half years, the WRDATF has undertaken to put a considerable effort into the training and up-skilling of those working in the western region. The aim of this initiative is to increase the skills and competencies of workers and volunteers in the region with regard to their response to drug- and alcohol-related issues. The first part of the 2015 WRDATF Training Calendar (January to July) which has just been completed has proven to be extremely popular with 27 courses offered. 368 places were available and over 200 individuals attended courses across the region.

Our evaluations show that the overall satisfaction rate of the quality of the training was 95% with 92% for training content. 87% reported an improvement in overall knowledge of the topics. Overall satisfaction with the trainers was 98%.

The autumn/winter training calendar (September to December) is currently being finalised and will be circulated in the coming weeks. It will also be available on the WRDATF website www.wrdtf.ie

For booking enquiries please email training@wrdtf.ie or contact the WRDATF office at 091-480044.
Debbie McDonagh, WRDATF Family Support Development Worker and co-author (with John Reddy) of the *WRDTF Family Support Needs Analysis Report* presented the details and findings of the report to a large audience from many agencies throughout the region when the document was launched at *Broadening the Debate: Family Support in the Context of Substance Use* Conference held in the Institute for Lifecourse and Society, NUI Galway on Monday, 2nd February.

Speakers at the event included Ms Vivienne Evans, Chief Executive of Adfam, UK; Ms Nora Gibbons, Independent Chairperson of Tusla and Mr. David McPhillips, team leader with the Community Substance Misuse Team in the Mid-West. Professor Pat Dolan, joint founder and Director of the UNESCO Child and Family Research Centre, NUIG, chaired the event.

The findings of the report indicate a high level of interest in acquiring relevant and up-to-date knowledge and awareness of drug- and alcohol-related issues, best practice solutions and appropriate treatments. Many felt drug and alcohol family support services should be developed and initiatives implemented in partnership with communities and other voluntary and community-based agencies. They also suggested drug and alcohol family support services should be publicised better, involve service users in designing and implementing initiatives, as well as train practitioners and others how best to support individuals and families affected by substance use.

This needs analysis is one component of the developmental work currently being undertaken by the WRDATF and will underpin the development of its forthcoming Family Support Strategy and accompanying three-year Action Plan.

*(Left to right: Ms Debbie McDonagh, Prof Pat Dolan, Ms Vivienne Evans, Ms Nora Gibbons, Mr David McPhillips)*

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**Towards 2016:**
**A drug and alcohol prevention seminar**

In June, Susan Scally, the Principal Officer of the Drug Policy Unit (DPU) at the Department of Health, welcomed delegates to the University of Limerick for a one-day seminar about Drug and Alcohol Prevention.

The WRDATF in collaboration with the Mid-West Regional Drugs and Alcohol Forum (MWRDAF) brought together the government department and agencies, along with non-statutory, voluntary and community sectors involved in the Prevention field to address the future direction of the ‘Prevention’ pillar.

Dr Saoirse Nic Gabhainn (Senior Lecturer in Health Promotion at NUIG) spoke to the seminar about international best practice and Ger McHugh (formerly of Foróige best practice unit and DEWF) discussed quality standards.

A document capturing the extensive input made by attendees will be produced in the autumn.

*Neil Wilson, Education Support Worker*

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**PRE-TEEN YEARS**
**A Parent’s guide to talking with your Child about Alcohol**

In a follow-up to the launch of the ‘Pre-teen Campaign’ in November, 2014, where it was introduced to all primary schools in counties Mayo and Roscommon, further parent information talks were completed in May and June of this year, aimed at supporting parents in having age-appropriate conversations with their children about alcohol, as a preventative measure in delaying the onset of alcohol consumption.

*Pat Conway, Community Liaison Worker, Mayo & North Roscommon*
As part of the NUI Galway Department of Health Promotion “2015 Health Literacy Conference” the resource booklet “Research Evidence to prevent alcohol-related harm: What communities can do in Ireland” was launched by Dr Cate Hartigan Head of Health Promotion and Improvement on 18th June.

This valuable resource outlines the up-to-date research and understandings of preventing and reducing alcohol-related harm at a community level.

Also speaking at the launch was Dr Ann Hope, Research Associate, Trinity College Dublin and internationally renowned alcohol-related harm expert. Dr Hope was the main contributor to the booklet through her in-depth knowledge of research in the field. She spoke about the importance of ensuring that actions aimed at preventing and reducing alcohol-related harm have a robust base of research evidence behind the proposed actions that support their efficacy.

The importance of supporting and calling for National Policy actions was highlighted (such as minimum price for a standard drink), as was the necessity of ensuring that local actions were undertaken in tandem to support an overall reduction in alcohol-related harm.

The WRDATF and HSE Health Promotion and Improvement were thanked and acknowledged for their assistance in commissioning and printing the booklet, as were the many members of the Galway Alcohol Forum who together work on the actions within the Galway City strategy to prevent and reduce alcohol-related harm including the action that this booklet is intending to achieve: “communicate effective measures to prevent and reduce alcohol-related harm and the benefits of undertaking these measures”.

Liam O Loughlin, Community Liaison Worker, Galway City & Connemara
**WRDATF Small Grants 2015**

In May the WRDATF advertised its 2015 Small Grants Funding. Closing date for applications was May 29th and there was a good response from organisations throughout the region. Applications were reviewed on June 11th and successful applications were notified in mid June. A total of €11,215 was allocated to projects.

Successful applicants will have one year to complete their projects. It is anticipated that a selection of projects will be included in future newsletters and showcased on the WRDATF website.

**Drug Related Litter**

Following discussions at a Task Force meeting on the issue of drug-related litter in Galway City, a decision was taken to gather together the relevant stakeholders in the city to get a clear picture of the nature and extent of the problem, and to ascertain what happens when drug litter is found by workers or members of the public.

The WRDATF is currently linking with the statutory organisations such as the HSE Drug Service, Public Health, An Garda Síochána and Galway City Council regarding this issue. The aim is to gather factual information on the safe disposal of drug litter and compile the data into a campaign or leaflet.

**Mayo Junior Cert Night Initiative**

It’s that time of year again and the Mayo Junior Cert Results Night Group (MJCNRG) has been busy finalising its 2015 campaign to help reduce alcohol-related harm around Junior Cert exam/result time. The initiative was developed by Pat Conway, CLW, and Gillian Conway, ESW and consists of staff members from An Garda Síochána, WRDATF, South West Mayo Development Company and the ISPCC. This year, the MJCNRG has again developed a Parents Information Campaign to coincide with the sitting of the Junior Cert Examination in June and in September the roll out of an Alcohol Awareness Module and a Harm Reduction campaign for students receiving their results.

In May, we distributed, via the secondary schools, an information pack *Teenage Years: A parent’s guide to protecting your teenager on a night out* to parents of all 1800 3rd year students in Co Mayo and in September, we aim to deliver an alcohol harm reduction information campaign to all students receiving their Junior Cert Results. The initiative also includes a very strong policing element, led by Sergeant De Rís of Castlebar Garda Station.

Pat Conway, Community Liaison Worker, Mayo & North Roscommon

**Drugs in Schools Initiative: Tuam Garda Division**

A pilot inter-agency project was developed in order to begin addressing some concerns that had been raised about drug use and drug-dealing among school-aged young people in Tuam and in North Galway.

The idea was to bring together the schools in the district and the local support agencies to discuss some of the problems that were arising for the schools and the agencies, look at possible solutions and develop some actions.

Among these issues were: drug dealing; drug use generally; substances being used and aggressive behaviour.

The actions that arose from the initial meeting were:

- Increased communication between the schools and Gardaí, JLO and Drug Squad.
- New WRDTF posters to all schools, training centres, family centres.
- Posters to be developed for the back of toilet doors in schools.
- Ongoing policing of pub and known hot spots.

It is hoped to expand the initiative to include the Garda Districts in Ballinasloe and Loughrea and also in Roscommon County.

Emmet Major Community Liaison Worker, Mayo & North Roscommon

**Western Region Drugs Task Force**

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The Western Region Drugs and Alcohol Task Force (WRDATF) is a co-ordinating body established in May 2003 as one of the key recommendations of the National Drugs Strategy, 2001-2008.

Using a partnership approach, it researches, develops & implements a co-ordinated, regionally appropriate response to substance misuse in Galway, Mayo and Roscommon.