The Western Region Drugs & Alcohol Task Force (WRDATF) would like to thank both Martin Lee and Fiona Walsh for their years of service to our Task Force. Both for different reasons, have parted ways with us and both have left the Task Force indebted to them for their commitment and service. We as a Task Force wish to thank them sincerely for all their years of service and we wish them all the best in the future. Martin took up the role of Independent Chairperson of the Task Force in 2009 and continued up until March 2016. Prior to his appointment to this role in the WRDATF, he was a superintendent in Salthill Garda station and therefore knew the devastation that drugs can have on communities. Martin’s experience in this field enriched his understanding of the complexity of addiction and this knowledge coupled with his enthusiastic manner was invaluable to the WRDATF going forward. Highlights of Martin Lee’s time include ‘launching the Drug and Alcohol Family Support Needs Analysis’ and the launch of ‘The Way forward’ the second strategic plan of the WRDATF 2011-2014. Thank you Martin for all your work and dedication.

Fiona Walsh is the Regional Drugs Co-coordinator for HSE West since 1996. Her name is synonymous with the WRDATF. Fiona was central to the development of the WRDATF in 2003 and her dedication to the issue of drugs and alcohol has been paramount to the success of the WRDATF. Her vast experience of working in both England and Ireland in the drug services has been invaluable to this Task Force over the last ten years. Fiona was responsible for ‘Shared Solutions’ which was the first strategic plan of the Western Region Drugs Task Force. Fiona was also heavily involved in 2nd strategic plan for the WRDATF ‘The Way Forward’(2011-2014). Fiona continues to work as the Co-coordinator of the Drug Service and programme manager of Jigsaw Galway. She also continues to be the HSE representative on the WRDATF. Thank you Fiona for all your work and support.

Dear Colleagues,

As you are aware 2016 has represented some change within our governance structure at the WRDATF. As the co-coordinator of the WRDATF I would like to personally thank Martin Lee and Fiona Walsh for all their hard work and wish them the very best in the future.

I would also like to welcome Deirdre Hurney to her new role as Chairperson of the WRDATF. We at the WRDATF are really excited to have her on board and we look forward to working closely with her.

I would like to take this time to welcome you to the summer edition of our newsletter which is both informative and inviting to you the reader. We have been very busy in the WRDATF working on both local and national initiatives. To my mind, the highlight so far has been the launch of the Family Support Strategy 2017-2020. We are currently in the process of developing the WRDATF Drug & Alcohol Strategy for 2017-2020. At present, a consultation process has begun which involves a series of engagements being undertaken with staff and funded workers, service users and the general public to capture opinions on the Task Force’s future direction. This strategy aims to address the presenting drug and alcohol issues in Galway, Mayo & Roscommon for 2017-2020 and respond appropriately. We are also involved in a lot of other initiatives highlighted in this newsletter. I hope you enjoy this edition.

Michéal Durcan
Co-ordinator Western Region Drug & Alcohol Task Force

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The 2016 WRDATF Awareness week is taking place between the 7th and 11th of November 2016. This will be a chance to showcase the work of the WRDATF. Details of some of the events are listed below.

**Older People and Substance Use.** Dr Gráinne Cousins Royal College of Surgeons will demonstrate the link between alcohol and drugs and older people.

**Overdose Awareness and Naloxone Training.** Training delivered by Dr Denis o Driscoll. The aim of the training is to enable workers to diagnose and treat suspected opioid overdose and to supply and administer naloxone in emergency situations competently and safely. It is advised that only those workers who have successfully completed the training on CPR may undertake the Diagnosis and Treatment of Suspected Narcotic (i.e. Opioid) Overdose and the Supply and Administration of Naloxone Programme.

"**How to talk to your teenager about drug use**" This workshop will be delivered by Pat Conway (CLW), Emmet Major (CLW) and Gillian Conway (ESW). Launch of the WRDATF’s new resource for parents. This leaflet is designed to assist parents in addressing the difficult topic of drug use with their young teenager. The launch will incorporate the findings of the Roscommon Schools Drug and Alcohol Survey 2016.

"**Communicating with your teenager** " Guest Speaker: John Lonergan (ex Governor of Mountjoy) Masterclass for parents on how to communicate effectively with young people. This evening session is designed for parents of teenagers and pre-teens and will focus on communication skills and adolescent development. The evening will incorporate the use of the new WRDATF leaflet “How to talk to your teenager about drug use”.

The final of the Alcohol and Society Public Speaking Competition in Co Mayo Will take place during the Awareness Week. The purpose of this public speaking project is to create awareness among young people about the impacts of alcohol upon society and to challenge attitudes that exist in relation to Irish culture and alcohol. It is hoped the project will help to build self-esteem and confidence among the young people who participate and assist in their own personal development.

**2016 WRDATF Training Programme**

The WRDATF is continuing to put a considerable effort into the training and upskilling of those working in the Western Region. The aim of the Training 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. So far this year a total of 188 people have been trained. 127 have received training in Saor: Screen and Brief intervention and 61 in other forms of training ranging from Naloxone & Overdose Awareness to Harm Reduction and Current Issues. 15 trainings have taken place in the first 6 months of the year and 13 more trainings are planned to take place between September and December 2016.

2016 Training Calendar (September to December) will be available shortly from the [www.wrdtf.ie](http://www.wrdtf.ie) or by emailing training@wrdtf.ie. Some of the training coming up includes the following: Women and Substance use, Saor Screen & Brief intervention, Good Practice in Drug Education, New and Emerging Drugs and Developing a Substance Use Policy.

**SAOR** is a one-day training that enables people to undertake a screening and brief intervention for alcohol or drug use. It incorporates use of the AUDIT-C and AUDIT screening tools and training on how to conduct a brief intervention when there is a concern about substance use. Brief interventions are effective in initiating change in alcohol consumption for people with mild to moderate alcohol-related problems and in helping people with more significant difficulties to access specialised alcohol treatment services.

This is for any staff who have occasion to ask people about their alcohol use. This could include workers from social care, family support, employment support, vocational training, criminal justice, probation, education, housing support and general health care services.

For more information about SAOR please contact the WRDATF office on 091 480044.
A new Drug & Alcohol Family Support Strategy was launched in Tuam on the 15th June. This event served as a launch and networking event for service providers throughout the region. Over eighty people attended with nineteen stands on display.

Speakers at the event included Ms Debbie McDonagh, WRDATF Family Support Coordinator, Ms Marion Rackard, Hidden Harm National Project and Dr Carmel Devaney, UNESCO Child and Family Research Centre, NUI Galway and the event was chaired by the WRDATF Co-ordinator Mr Michéal Durcan.

The overall aim of the WRDATF Family Support Strategy is to develop an evidenced based regional strategic plan to improve and enhance supports for individuals/families living the drug/alcohol use of a family member. Central to the development of the strategy was to establish the needs of families from both a service provider and family member perspective which was conducted by Debbie McDonagh. Following on from the regional needs analysis, an extensive review of national, international research and policy documents was completed before an extensive consultation process was carried out.

This strategy sets out the future direction for the Western Region Drug & Alcohol Task Force regarding its work on Family Support within Galway, Mayo and Roscommon. The strategy sets out twenty four goals for the next four years and aims to work with all relevant stakeholders to achieve these goals. The strategy will be overseen by the Western Region Drug & Alcohol Task Force Family Support Working Group and will be reviewed on an annual basis.

Firstly, I would like to acknowledge and thank co-author Orla Walshe, I would also like to thank Ms Fiona Walsh and Dr. Carmel Devaney, the staff and members of the Task Force, and to all who contributed to the strategy. A special word of thanks to the families who contributed to the strategy through the sharing of their personal experiences and offering invaluable suggestions and recommendations.

Hard copies of the strategy can be request from the Task Force Office. The strategy is available online: at http://www.wrdatf.ie

Family Support Booklet
An information book for families affected by substance use is currently being developed by the WRDATF and HSE West Drug Services. It is anticipated that this book will act as a resource for families/concerned persons. The book will contain a mix of practical information such as signs and symptoms of drug use, understanding addiction, impacts on family, drugs and the law, care options, supports available in the western region and so on. This book will be launched during Awareness Week..

Catherine Byrne T.D and T.F. Staff
Minister of State for Communities and the National Drugs Strategy Catherine Byrne T.D visited the Newport office of South West Mayo Development Company (SWMDC) recently where she met the Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP) frontline staff and participants. While on her visit to Newport, WRDATF funded workers and employees of SWMDC Pat Conway (CLW) and Gillian Conway (DESW) had the pleasure of meeting the Minister and explained to her the ongoing work of the WRDATF projects in Co Mayo and Roscommon.
The Western Region Drugs and Alcohol Task Force (WRDATF) is a coordinating 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.

The results of a recent survey to assess behaviours, attitudes and awareness in relation to alcohol use in Galway City have been released by the Galway Alcohol Strategy. This survey of over 500 people (18 years and over) in Galway City has found that of those who drink (79%), over half (55%) were hazardous drinkers. In addition, one in five (20%) reported one or more harms due to their own drinking for example an accident, fight, problems in work, friendship, home-life; and one in four (25%) of all respondents reported experiencing one or more harms as a result of someone else’s drinking - family problems.

This is an alcohol related health promotion campaign that was run during May and June of 2016 and is designed to help reduce the early adoption of drinking behaviour in school-aged children. It involved the 450 primary schools in counties Galway, Roscommon and Mayo. The campaign targeted the parents of the 8,000 children in sixth class in the region and was developed in order to encourage these parents to initiate age-appropriate conversations with their children about alcohol, preferably before they make the transition into post-primary education. If you ask teenagers themselves at what age they think alcohol education should start they will overwhelmingly say that it’s happening too late and that it should commence at the age when they are in sixth class and in first year. Most children know that alcohol is only for adults but between the ages of nine and thirteen, young people start to view alcohol more positively. Over 20 percent of 12-year-olds say they have tried alcohol and by age 15, that number jumps to 70 percent. The reason a campaign like this is important is that parents really underestimate the short and long-term consequences arising from underage alcohol consumption. For example, young people who start drinking before the age of 15 are up to: 4 times more likely to develop alcohol dependency later in life than those who wait until they are 21.

Galway Alcohol Strategy

PRE-TEEN YEARS A Parent’s Guide to Talking with Your Child about Alcohol

Unit 6, Galway Technology Park
Parkmore, Galway
Tel: 091 480044
Email: info@wrdatf.ie
Web: www.wrdatf.ie

Training with the defence forces

Neil Wilson presented an overview of the drug scene in Ireland before Debbie McDonagh looked at the range of issues that may arise from use within the context of the family and community. Mick Coppinger of the Gardai also participated by concentrating on issues concerning drug intimidation. This has particular relevance within the military context as soldiers have ready access to firearms and possess specialised skills which could be utilized by criminal elements. The Military Police also used the opportunity to impress upon the attendees the ‘Zero-Tolerance’ approach adopted by the Irish Defence Forces and how this applies to random drug testing sessions. We would like to thank the training staff of the Defence Forces for their hospitality and support in approaching the issue of alcohol and drug use within the military in a proactive, open and progressive way.

ChemSex in Ireland....Training

Date: 7th October 2016. 10 AM – 4 PM
This training will address ChemSex contexts/motivations, risk assessments, harm reduction information, HIV/HCV/STI implications and will support attendees to develop appropriate support services and psychosocial interventions. Training will be provided by David Stewart, Substance Use Lead at 56 Dean Street London (An NHS sexual health clinic based in Soho which offer full outpatients HIV clinic services). This training is appropriate for frontline staff and sexual health staff who may encounter clients with ChemSex issues. In addition, researchers, community organisations, drug services, counselling services, policy makers and commissioners, community leaders, community advocates and others with strong professional interest in ChemSex issues are welcome. Followed by a public screening of ‘CHEMSEX’ (a documentary film) Location: Galway City
Cost: €95 (including lunch)
CPD: ICGP accreditation points available (pending)
Limited places - Reserve you seat by contacting Neil at AIDS West: chemsexconference@gmail.com / 091 566266 before 19 August 2016

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