



Traveller Specific Drugs Initiative



01 8780255 ext 10 4 & johnpaul.collins@pavee.ie or
sinead.smith@pavee.ie Spring 2008 E-bulletin

National Drugs Strategy 2009-2012: Promoting Traveller Inclusion in a new strategy

Call for Submissions to the next national drug strategy

The Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs has called for submissions from interested parties on the development of the next national drug strategy. We would strongly encourage all local Traveller organisations to make submissions on the local drug situation to ensure that Travellers are included in the new strategy. The current strategy runs out at the end of this year and the only action in the current one Building on Experience: 2001-2008 was to carry out research on drug issues in the Traveller community. The situation of drugs in the Traveller community has changed significantly since the last strategy was developed in 2000 and these changes should be reflected in the new strategy.

Pavee Point will be developing a joint submission with the other national Traveller organisations. Local Groups can sign up to this submission which will be disseminated before **the 4th April deadline.**

In making a submission we would be recommending that at a minimum the next strategy should be underpinned by the following principles:

- 1) Travellers included as a target group across all the pillars within the new strategy
- 2) Travellers named as target groups to be included within all new services and project development by the National Drug Strategy
- 3) That the inclusion of Travellers will be fostered within the structures and processes of the National Drug Strategy Team, Local and Regional Drug Task Forces
- 4) The inclusion of the agreed actions from the implementation plan from the National Advisory Committee on Drugs report on Travellers '**An overview of the nature and extent of illicit drug use amongst the Traveller community: an exploratory study**'

A draft strategy plan is envisaged to be completed in June and the National Drug Strategy Team have already submitted preliminary comments to it with the Local Drug Task Force strategic plans and the Regional Drug Task Force also feeding in by early April. CRAIGI are co-ordinating the development of the new strategy and a consultant has been employed and consultations will take place around the country on the bigger picture issues. We will be sending information on the public consultations to Traveller groups when that information is publicly available.

There has been a call for submissions from interested parties and regional consultations for the general public will also take place. The deadline for submissions is **Friday April 4th '08.**

Consultation with Traveller organisations on the next NDS

A separate focused session with Traveller organisations will be co-facilitated by the TSDI and the NDST community representative on **May 8th '08 from 11-4.** This focused session is targeted at Traveller organisations **currently funded or directly engaged in drug related work or structures.** Information on this event will be circulated to Traveller groups in advance and groups interested in attending this event can

Funding for the national drug strategy (budget 2008)

In the December budget for 2008, an additional 18 million euros was allocated for drug issues, with much of this earmarked for the new drug rehabilitation strategy. However, budget allocations will include additional funding being made available for local drug awareness campaigns on cocaine initiatives with a recent announcement by Minister Pat Carey of 2 million euro allocation for this purpose. Funding was previously announced in February for community based drug initiatives for premises and refurbishment allocated through the Young People's Facilities and Services Fund. There are concerns among many community groups that 2008 will be a 'holding year' i.e. that no additional resources apart from focused areas like the above will be made available for the establishment of new drug initiatives in local areas. This is already having implications for local Traveller groups seeking additional resources within local drug task force areas.

Update on the implementation Strategy for the National Advisory Committee on Drugs Report on the nature and extent of drug misuse within the Traveller Community

The Drug Strategy Unit within the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs has agreed to support the development of an implementation plan for the NACD report on Travellers. This is a very positive initiative and will mean the identification of lead agencies, a timeframe and actions to implement each of the recommendations in the report. The implementation plan will be monitored by the Drug Strategy Unit at regular intervals.

Promoting Traveller Employment within HSE Addiction Services & New National Drug Awareness Campaign Launched

Positive Action on Traveller Employment within Addition Services

Positive Action Initiatives

What is it?

In August 2007, Pavee Point developed a proposal for the roll out of a one year pilot initiative to train and employ Travellers as project workers within HSE addiction services. A meeting took place with the HSE eastern regional Traveller Health Unit co-ordinator in September 2007 to discuss the possibility of rolling out a pilot PAI in the eastern region and there was broad support for the project in principle.

What are we proposing?

This pilot project would train and employ ten Travellers as drug workers in HSE funded projects over a twelve month period. The training would consist of a recognised addiction studies qualification plus on the job training within the HSE addiction services. The proposal sets out broadly a key set of actions that would be involved in setting up this initiative. Currently with the HSE embargo, the availability of Whole Time Equivalent posts which to employ Travellers for a one year period are not available. This issue regarding the embargo would need to be resolved before the proposal could be put into action.

What's been done before?

This positive action initiative would build on work already being carried out by other public service bodies such as the Civil Service Commission and would be in line with recommendations of the National Advisory Committee on Drugs report entitled *An overview of the nature and extent of illicit drug use amongst the Traveller community: an exploratory study* by Professor Jane Fountain published in October 2006 and an earlier report on ethnic minorities by Merchant's Quay Ireland. The NACD report makes the following recommendation relating to Traveller employment in drug services:

Recommendation Four

'Adapt the organizational culture of drug services to consider the cultural diversity of Ireland by considering Travellers' drug service needs in terms of the importance of the family, outreach work, nomadism, specific and generic services, literacy skills, appointments, waiting lists, social exclusion and work force development.'

The recent publication of the Traveller employment toolkit by the Traveller Health Unit in the eastern region also points to the potential of the HSE in terms of Traveller employment.

Where to now?

In a recent meeting with the National Drug Strategy Team in February '08, the TSDI raised the positive action initiative proposal. We have asked them to discuss it with the structures that they work with including the HSE co-ordinator on the national drug strategy team and other team representatives who sit on the High Level Officials Group. The rationale for this is that the HLOG have been actively pursuing Traveller employment as a key policy and area of interest. The TSDI will also highlight this proposal with the HSE to ensure that this initiative is kept on the agenda.

'The Party's Over'...HSE launch Cocaine Campaign

On the 11th of February 2008, the National Drug Awareness Campaign on drugs was officially launched by the minister of state with responsibility for drugs Pat Carey. The theme of the campaign will be Cocaine with the slogan being *'The Party is Over'*. The campaign is targeted towards 18-34 year olds and aims to dispel the myths and close some of the knowledge gaps among users and the research suggests some level of detachment and denial on the part of users in relation to the risks of cocaine use. New leaflets on cocaine and drugs in general have been produced by the HSE. Funding will be allocated to local areas to raise awareness about problematic cocaine use and two million euros has been made available.

The campaign will use different media such as billboards, radio ads with voices discussing cocaine at weekend slots, newspapers (Irish people have a high readership of newspapers) and the internet e.g. www.dap.ie with SMS texting available for accessing information about cocaine. The HSE info line will be open Monday to Friday 9-8 which will direct people to services and resources, **call 1850 24 1850 or by SMS (txt drugs to 51900)**

Attitudes to cocaine use in Ireland

According to research which looks at the habits and attitudes of cocaine users aged 18-34 in Ireland, nearly two thirds of people who use cocaine (64%) are unconvinced or don't believe that cocaine is a highly addictive drug. About one in seven users (14% approx) become dependent on cocaine and one in 20 users become addicted in the first year of use. Furthermore, only two in five users (43%) are concerned about the effect cocaine use has on their health.

Cocaine usage in Ireland

according to most recent NACD figures, cocaine use has increased from 2.9% in 2002/3 to 5% in 2006/7 (NACD: 2008, lifetime use 15-64 yrs) almost 1 in 10 people aged 25 – 34 have used cocaine - lifetime use among the 25-34 age group use has risen from 4.2% to 9.2% the increase among 15-34 year olds in cocaine use is from 4.5% to 7.8%

Ireland is fourth in Europe for cocaine use

Some of the key messages that the campaign is trying to put across are

Cocaine is not a clean drug

Cocaine is addictive

Cocaine causes serious health risks

The TSDI has concerns that the campaign is taking a universal or general population approach and is not incorporating a targeted dimension to the campaign so the target group are 18-34 year olds as a generic group. There is no specific focus on different target groups and their use of cocaine e.g. women who are cocaine users, Travellers or ethnic minorities apart from the information on cocaine will be translated into a number of languages). We are currently developing a Traveller specific cocaine leaflet which we circulate to Traveller groups along with other generic materials on cocaine in the near future.

NEWS BITES

New Drug Initiatives within Local Traveller organisations

Wicklow Travellers Group

In 2007, Wicklow Travellers Group received funding through the East Coast Regional Drugs Task Force for a Community Development/Outreach Worker. Anne McDonnell took up this position from January 2008. Project work involves developing programmes and activities in the context of the recommendations from 'An analysis of needs and potential for a Traveller-specific drugs strategy in the Wicklow Traveller Group (WTG) catchment area'.

The needs analysis provides recommendations for a youth-focused drugs strategy within a holistic framework. Recommendations focus on developing social and recreational opportunities for young Travellers, relevant training and peer education. The needs analysis recommends that a drugs strategy for Traveller youth should be a holistic project, integrated into the broader community development framework that has already been developed, and serving to expand this and target specific at risk groups within it. The better the community infrastructure, in terms of capacity, skills and opportunities to pursue improved quality of life, the more effective targeted drugs education, prevention, harm reduction and other treatment actions will be.

Anne can be contacted at **085 7777299**.

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Local Drug Task Forces present their Strategic Plans to the NDST

The NDST has begun the process of meeting with each individual local drug task force to review their draft strategic plans and so far have met with six including: Ballyfermot, Finglas, Dun Laoghaire, Dublin North East, Ballymun and Canal Communities. Five of the six name Travellers in the new plan. The NDST will meet with the other 8 task forces by the **10th March** and will feed back to the TSDI on Traveller inclusion within these plans.

The purpose of the strategic review is to examine the following areas:

- The current drugs situation in your communities;
- What are the needs to be addressed;
- To what extent current services meet those needs;
- To look at partnership working in the delivery of essential local services;
- To determine future priorities for the LDTF.

Jargon Buster

National Drug Strategy 2001-8: The national drug strategy is an action plan containing 109 actions across five pillars relating to drug issues including education/prevention, treatment, rehabilitation plus research and supply reduction. There are a number of government departments and agencies responsible for ensuring the actions are carried out. In 2004, the government carried out a mid term review of the national drug strategy and added an additional nine actions to the original 100.

In 2007, the government published a report on rehabilitation and this was added as an additional pillar. The National Drug Strategy Team has responsibility for co-ordinating the implementation of the actions at a national level. At a local and regional level, the local and regional drug task forces co-ordinate the strategy. Currently, the government are in the process of producing a new strategy for 2009-16.

New Drug Initiatives within Local Traveller organisations

Cork Travellers Visibility Group

Hello! We are Ann Jordan and Nora Cash. We are the new Community Drugs Workers in TVG Cork. The TVG Community Drugs Project started in November '07. It aims to develop a harm reduction response to the needs of Travellers, especially young Travellers, in the Cork City Area who are actively involved in drug/alcohol misuse or identified as being at serious risk of becoming so. Our project is for 12 months.

Ann is full-time and funded through the Local Drugs Task Force. Nora is part-time and is funded through the C.E. scheme. Our project will raise awareness amongst the Traveller Community of the issues surrounding drugs and drug and alcohol use within the community.

We will also aim raise awareness among service providers of Travellers' drug service needs. During the year we will support and encourage the active participation of the Traveller community in the project and create TVG as an information and support resource. Throughout the year there will be a lot of research and data collection and we're hoping that this will build a concrete picture for the Traveller Community with regard to drug and alcohol use.

Through this work we hope to create safe and confidential conditions for the Traveller Community to discuss drug and alcohol use and misuse.

Anne Jordan and Nora Cash TVG Cork



Local and Regional Drug Task Forces Community Representatives Conference April 4/5/6th April Killeshin Hotel Portlaoise

This event is hosted by the National Drug Strategy and Interdepartmental Group Community Representatives and facilitated by Citywide Drug Crisis Campaign for Community Representatives on Drug Task Forces.

The conference aims are:

- To consult with Task Force community representatives in relation to the development of the new National Drugs Strategy 2009-2016
- To formulate recommendations on the responses and actions needed to address the drug problem in our communities
- To make recommendations on how communities can continue to play a lead role in developing, planning and delivering our National Drugs Strategy.

The TSDI will be doing an input on involving 'communities of interest' in next national drug strategy and we would strongly encourage and would support current Traveller representatives on Task Forces to attend this important event. Information has been circulated to Traveller groups, however those who require further information can contact us or Citywide directly on **01 8365090** or

Email info@citywide.ie