



WESTERN REGION

Drug & Alcohol Task Force

Meitheal Drugaí an Iarthair



STRATEGIC PLAN

2017 - 2020





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Welcome

By The Chairperson

As Chairperson of the Western Region Drugs & Alcohol Task Force, I am delighted to present our new Strategic Plan.

This Strategic Plan sets out what we intend to achieve during the next three years in delivering our mission to provide a mechanism for all stakeholders - people who use drugs and alcohol, families, local communities, service providers, community and voluntary organisations - to work together to address drug and alcohol issues in the Western Region.

Our overall aim is to address the harm caused to individuals, families, communities and society by the use of drugs and alcohol. We do this by working closely with our partners across the Region and we recognise that the success of the Task Force is based on collaboration and relationship-building between all our partners. We are stronger when we work together through joined-up actions.

We are committed to promoting the delivery of effective supports and services for all people affected by drugs and alcohol use, to supporting harm reduction approaches and to furthering the Region's understanding of drug and alcohol issues.

The WRDATF is privileged to have professional and committed staff and funded workers, who are vitally important to delivering our mission and goals. Based in Galway City, Mayo and Roscommon, they are a committed team who work with all our partners and stakeholders across the Region to reduce the harm caused by drugs and alcohol.

The development of this Strategic Plan has benefitted enormously from the excellent engagement of our staff, funded workers, our Task Force partners and the numerous groups and organisations who participated in the consultation process.

I look forward to working with all of you to deliver this strategy over the next three years.

Deirdre Hurney
Independent Chairperson
September 2017

Foreword

By Task Force Coordinator

As Coordinator of the Western Region Drug & Alcohol Task Force I welcome this Strategic Plan. It provides us with a roadmap that will strengthen collaboration between all our partners in ensuring a multi-agency and regionally appropriate response to the harm caused by the misuse of alcohol and drugs in Galway, Mayo and Roscommon.

Detailed consultation with both internal and external stakeholders, followed by intense discussion and planning, has led to the development and publication of this plan. By engaging in this comprehensive and fruitful process, we have been able to formulate key goals and objectives that will drive our work over the next three years. I believe this process has led to the development of a cohesive, integrated and relevant strategic response to current needs within the region.

The WRDATF has a recognised track record in fulfilling its drug and alcohol prevention brief, as well as a capacity to deliver evidence-based training and skills-based interventions that strengthen responses to alcohol and drugs issues in the region. Through this strategy we will build on this work, adapting our responses in line with best practice. We are very proud of the WRDATF Family Support Strategy 2017-2020 which lays out a clear role for the Task Force in supporting families affected by drug

and alcohol misuse. This Strategy will underpin the goals and objectives recognised in that document.

In response to ongoing challenges in the Western Region, the Task Force is embarking on a new way of working by engaging in the development and co-ordination of 'Rehabilitation Support Pathways'. These will provide progression pathways for people who misuse drugs and alcohol through a range of educational, training & employment opportunities to promote rehabilitation and integration. We believe this additional strand of work will complement the various responses currently delivered in the region.

I would like to take the opportunity to thank the numerous stakeholders who were central to the evolution of this strategic plan. By taking the time to engage in the consultation process, you provided us with really informative dialogue and discussion that helped shape this process.

Finally, I would like to thank Sinéad Doody whose dedication, skill, and expertise proved invaluable in collating all this information into a progressive Western Region Drug & Alcohol Task Force Strategic Plan 2017-2020.

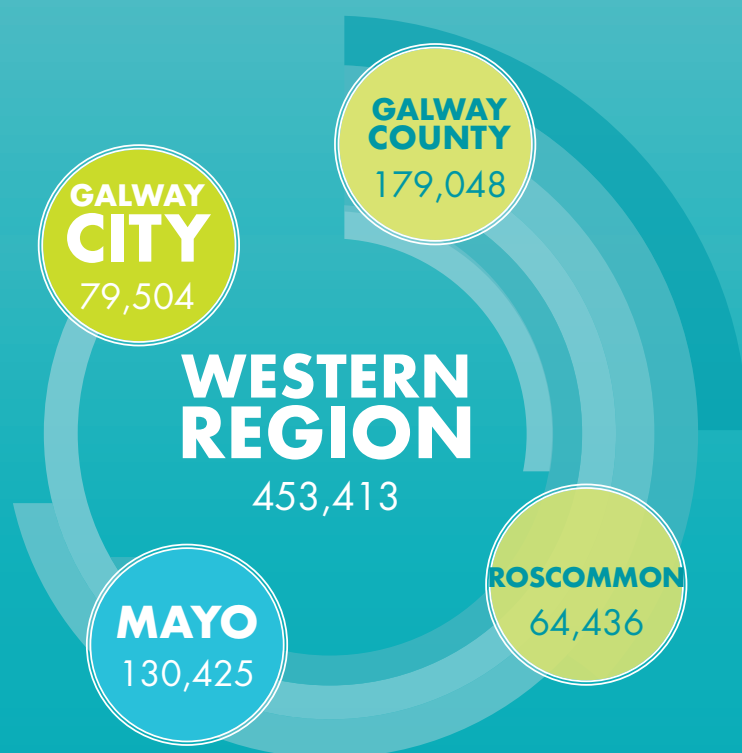
Michéal Durcan
Coordinator

Background

Context

The Western Region Drug and Alcohol Task Force was set up in 2003 as part of the Government's efforts to address drug issues in Ireland. We are part of a national network of 24 Regional and Local Task Forces across the country that are funded by the Department of Health, through the Health Service Executive (HSE). Under the National Drugs Strategy, 2017-2025, Task Forces "play a key role in coordinating interagency action at local-level and supporting evidence-based approaches to problem substance use, including alcohol and illegal drugs".

The WRDATF covers the "Western Region" which encompasses counties Galway, Mayo and Roscommon. In 2016, the population of the Region was 453,413, broken down as follows:



In the context of the Task Force's role, the Western Region presents a number of geographical challenges. It is the largest Task Force region in the country and has a significant urban-rural divide. For example, census 2016 shows that the population of Galway City rose by 5.3% to almost 80,000 since 2011, while the population of Mayo is one of only two counties in Ireland which has seen a population decline in the same period.

Reducing Harm, Supporting Recovery – A health-led response to drug and alcohol use in Ireland 2017-2025 (National Drug Strategy)

Reducing Harm, Supporting Recovery sets out the Government’s strategy to address the harm caused by substance misuse in Ireland. It identifies key actions to be delivered between 2017 and 2020, and provides an opportunity for the development of further actions from 2021 to 2025. The strategy aims to foster a person-centred approach to those who develop drug or alcohol-related problems, while underlining the need for a whole-of-government response to the socio-economic, cultural and environmental risk factors contributing to the causes of substance misuse. It has five goals:



Implementation of Reducing Harm, Supporting Recovery will be overseen by a National Oversight Committee which will ensure, through a Standing Sub-Committee, that Drug and Alcohol Task Forces and other key stakeholders are engaged in supporting its implementation.

Defining Substance Misuse

The National Drugs Strategy defines substance misuse as “harmful or hazardous use of psychoactive substances, including alcohol and illegal drugs”.

Recent years have seen a shift in attitudes towards substance misuse, with a growing recognition that substance misuse is primarily a health issue and therefore requires a health-led response. Since its inception, the Task Force has identified alcohol as a significant issue in the Western Region and has worked consistently to address both drug and alcohol issues across the Region. In 2013, the Task Force role was formally expanded to include alcohol in accordance with national policy, thus becoming the Western Region Drug and Alcohol Task Force.

How We Work

Collaboration



The complex nature of drug and alcohol misuse requires a partnership response. We aim to strengthen collaboration between all those involved in responding to the needs of individuals, families and communities in Galway, Mayo and Roscommon. We foster partnership based on respect, understanding and trust, and work closely with our partners to achieve our mission. We strive to harness the expertise and energy of all stakeholders and recognise that the Task Force's strength is built on the active participation of all involved. More information on our partners can be found on page 22.

Dedicated Team



We have a small team of dedicated staff who work from our office in Galway City. We also fund and work closely with several organisations who host "funded workers" to implement Task Force strategy throughout the Region. Our staff and funded workers have considerable and diverse experience in drug and alcohol related issues at local, regional and national level.

Needs-Based



The Task Force works in a variety of ways with communities and organisations across the Region to provide needs-based programmes and responses. We offer some of our programmes on a Regional basis, while others have a local focus. We aim to support communities to build their own capacity to address drug and alcohol issues at a local level. We provide information and supports to empower all those affected by drug and alcohol issues to improve their health, wellbeing and quality of life.

Priority Groups

This strategy focuses on both whole-population and targeted approaches. It recognises that universal, broad-based programmes and interventions are key to promoting and protecting health and wellbeing amongst society in general. It also recognises that specific groups and communities are particularly vulnerable to harm caused by drug and alcohol misuse. These include, but are not limited to:

- Children at risk, including those leaving care
- Homeless people
- LGBTI young people
- Long-term substance users

- New communities
- People with co-morbid mental health and substance use problems
- Prisoners and ex-offenders
- Sex workers
- The Traveller community
- Third level students

Assessment of Needs

An immediate priority of this Strategic Plan is to develop a comprehensive drug and alcohol needs assessment of Galway, Mayo and Roscommon. The study will be led by HSE Public Health, in partnership with a multi-agency



steering group, and will aim to identify areas of unmet need in the Region. By summarising the prevalence of drug and alcohol misuse and examining the effectiveness of current service provision, the study will assist in the identification of priorities for service provision in the Region. A broad range of stakeholders will be consulted as part of the study, including people who use drugs and alcohol, service-providers and other key groups.

Family support

The Task Force recognises that family members often require support, in their own right, when a family-member is affected by drug or alcohol use. Its Family Support Strategy, 2017-2020, provides a four-year collaborative framework for enhanced supports to individuals/families living with a family member's drug/alcohol misuse. The strategy sets out its goals under four headings:

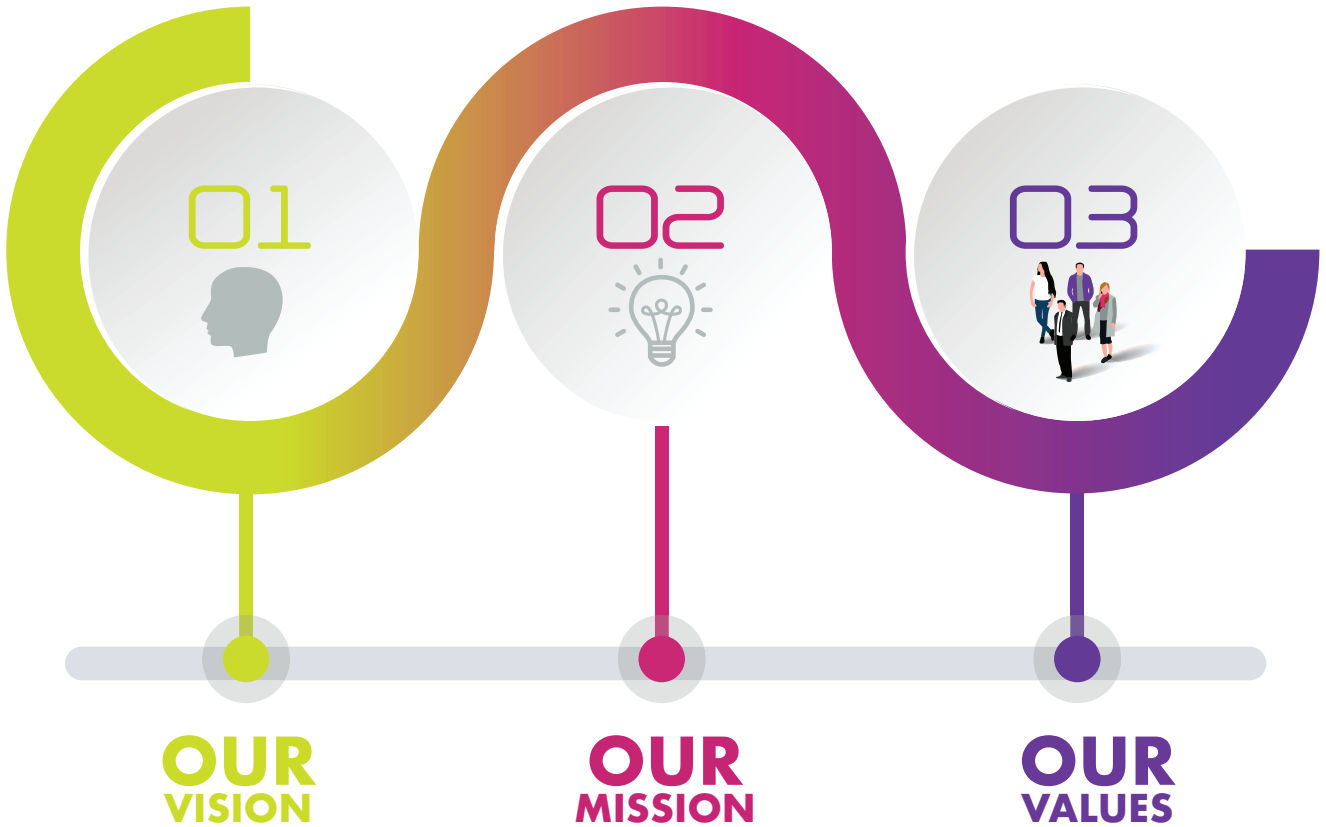
- Awareness and Information
- Capacity Building
- Service Provision and Interagency Working
- Research and Evaluation

The *Family Support Strategy* forms an integral component of this Strategic Plan and should be read in conjunction with it. It was developed in response to the recommendations of the 2015 Family Support Needs Analysis which was undertaken by the Task Force to strengthen understanding of the needs of families and to identify how to improve services to families in the Western Region.

The Task Force has also published a Family Support Handbook providing practical information on a wide range of drug and alcohol related issues, including types of drugs, signs and symptoms of drug use, health issues, overdose risks, drug-related intimidation, bereavement, child welfare and self-care.

Public Duty

The Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014 places a positive duty on public sector bodies to have regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, promote equality and protect human rights, in their daily work. In this context, this strategy aims to promote equality of opportunity and treatment, and to protect the human rights of our staff and all those with whom we engage.



Our vision is for healthy and safe communities in Galway, Mayo and Roscommon, where everyone affected by substance misuse is treated with equality and respect and has access to the supports they require.

Our mission is to provide a mechanism for all stakeholders - people who use drugs and alcohol, families, local communities, service providers, community and voluntary organisations - to work together to address drug and alcohol issues in the Western Region.

In developing and delivering this strategy, we are guided by the following key values and approaches:

- Partnership
- Participation
- Person-Centred
- Respect
- Equality and Human Rights
- Health-Based
- Community Focus
- Evidence-Informed

What We Do



We facilitate collaboration between all stakeholders involved in addressing drug and alcohol issues in the Western Region



We raise awareness of the impact of drug and alcohol misuse on individuals, families and communities and provide topical information on drug and alcohol issues and trends



We provide training on drug and alcohol issues; to service-providers, to organisations and agencies, to groups and to the general public



We support communities to build their capacity to address drug and alcohol issues locally



We support service-providers who work with families affected by a members' drugs or alcohol misuse



We provide a targeted rehabilitation support pathways for people who use drugs and alcohol



We advocate for effective supports and services in the Western Region and inform national policy on drug and alcohol issues



We undertake and support research/analysis with a view to furthering the understanding of drug and alcohol issues in the Western Region.



We promote consistent monitoring and assessment of drug and alcohol issues across the Region

Strategic Goals & Objectives

2017 - 2020

COLLABORATION & POLICY

Goal	Facilitate the development and delivery of health-based, person-centred, collaborative responses to drug & alcohol issues across the Region.
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1 OBJECTIVE
Promote stronger collaboration between stakeholders responding to drug and alcohol misuse in the Region to improve service delivery and address service gaps.

OBJECTIVE 2
Promote the participation of drug and alcohol users, service-users and their families in the planning, development and monitoring of local responses to drug and alcohol misuse.

OBJECTIVE 3
Undertake and support high quality drug and alcohol related research, monitoring and evaluation, to promote evidence-based policies, services and supports for individuals and families.

OBJECTIVE 4
Advocate for the development and delivery of effective drug and alcohol services and policies in the Western Region.

Key Outcomes

- Improved outcomes for people affected by drug and alcohol misuse through more responsive, accessible supports and services.
- Improved collaboration between organisations involved in addressing drug and alcohol issues, leading to more effective services and supports.
- Timely, evidence-based, regionally specific data and analysis on drug and alcohol issues and services in the Western Region available to all stakeholders, including policy-makers and funders.
- Greater involvement of people who are affected by drugs and alcohol in the development of services and supports in the Region, including those delivered by the Task Force.

Key Actions:

- Facilitate monthly Task Force Committee meetings which are inclusive & outcome-focused.
- Develop a Regional Drug & Alcohol Needs Analysis in partnership with HSE (Public Health).
- Develop and implement a service-user participation strategy for Task Force services and programmes at individual, service and strategic level.
- Participate actively in Galway City Alcohol Forum which aims to prevent and reduce alcohol related harm in Galway City.
- Through the Task Force Committee and Task Force Coordinator advocate at national level on drug and alcohol related matters in the Western Region.

TRAINING & AWARENESS RAISING

Goal	Increase knowledge, understanding and skills on drug and alcohol related matters through quality information and evidence-based training and supports.
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1 OBJECTIVE
Strengthen knowledge and understanding of drug and alcohol issues through information, resources, programmes and campaigns.

OBJECTIVE 2
Co-ordinate and provide a broad range of information and skills-based training on drug and alcohol related issues to voluntary, community and statutory stakeholders.

OBJECTIVE 3
Through training and other supports, enhance the capacity of professionals to provide appropriate evidenced-based interventions and supports to people who use drugs and alcohol.

Key Outcomes

- The public are better informed and aware of drug and alcohol misuse as a health issue, leading to reduced stigma and stereotyping.
- Improved availability of up-to-date, user-friendly drug and alcohol information, including local services/supports, events, trends, publications and national policy developments.
- Service-providers and others who interact with people who use drugs and alcohol are equipped with skills and confidence to respond more appropriately to their needs.
- Service-providers delivering improved approaches to service provision which reduce the harm associated with drug and alcohol use.

Key Actions:

- Produce and disseminate WRDATF's Annual Training Calendar on training courses delivered in locations across the region.
- Deliver up-skilling training to front-line professionals, including SAOR (brief intervention), Motivational Interviewing & Community Reinforcement Approach (CRA).
- Deliver Putting the Pieces Together, an integrated holistic approach to working with young people, parents and communities.
- Coordinate the annual Drug & Alcohol Awareness Week.
- Enhance WRDATF website as an accessible, informative resource on drug and alcohol issues.
- Deliver a range of awareness-raising programmes in schools, including Pre-Teen Years Campaign and Stay Safe Stay Sober Junior Cert Campaign.

REHABILITATION SUPPORT PATHWAYS

Goal	Assist rehabilitation and recovery through the delivery of a range of educational, personal development, training and employment opportunities.
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1 OBJECTIVE
Provide a range of progression pathways for people who misuse drugs and alcohol.

OBJECTIVE 2
Support the integration of people who misuse drugs and alcohol into vocational training and education programmes.

OBJECTIVE 3
Enhance linkages and referral processes between service providers to strengthen rehabilitation outcomes for people who misuse drugs and alcohol.

Key Outcomes

- People who use drugs and alcohol have improved access to appropriate services through strengthened referral and support processes.
- People who misuse drugs and alcohol have improved employment opportunities through access to career guidance, volunteering experience and increased qualifications.
- People who misuse drugs and alcohol have improved self-care, health and fitness outcomes.
- Improved referral mechanisms between agencies and organisations involved in providing supports and services to people who misuse drugs and alcohol.

Key Actions:

- Establish and coordinate Smart Recovery programmes in the region.
- Establish a suite of psychoeducational programmes including QQI level 4 Health-Related Fitness Programme within GRET, for clients coming from high-risk backgrounds.
- Explore the viability of establishing a community detox programme in the region.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Goal

To build the capacity of local communities to effectively address drug and alcohol issues.

1 OBJECTIVE

Support community stakeholders to build capacity, resources & expertise to effectively address drug and alcohol issues locally and to support those affected by drug & alcohol misuse.

OBJECTIVE 2

Collaborate with community stakeholders to develop local initiatives which prevent, reduce and respond to drug and alcohol issues.

OBJECTIVE 3

Strengthen engagement with people who use drugs and alcohol in the development of needs-based local responses.

Key Outcomes

- Community-based projects and programmes working to prevent drug and alcohol issues at local level and to support individuals and families affected by drug and alcohol use.
- Community-based organisations providing leadership, skills and capacity in drug and alcohol prevention and in responding appropriately to the needs of local people.
- People who misuse drugs and alcohol are more involved in developing local responses to local issues.

Key Actions:

- Provide training and supports to local groups and organisations to develop appropriate drug and alcohol policies.
- Undertake an assessment of community drug and alcohol training needs across the Region.
- Support the delivery of actions in Galway Alcohol Strategy's "Research evidence to prevent alcohol-related harm: What communities can do in Ireland".
- Support roll-out of the Community Harm Reduction Initiative (CHRI) which enables communities address concerns about drug and alcohol misuse.

FAMILY SUPPORT

Goal

Promote the development and delivery of effective supports and services to families affected by drug and alcohol misuse.

1 OBJECTIVE

Create greater awareness and understanding of the complexities and impact of drug and alcohol misuse on families.

OBJECTIVE 2

Enhance capacity of professionals working with families affected by drug & alcohol misuse to meet their needs through appropriate supports and services.

OBJECTIVE 3

Promote improved collaboration between all stakeholders to increase accessibility to services for families affected by drug & alcohol misuse.

OBJECTIVE 4

Provide information, training and supports to families affected by drug & alcohol misuse.

Key Outcomes

- Service providers and other stakeholders have improved awareness and understanding of the complex nature of substance use on family members.
- Service-providers and other stakeholders have increased skills and capacity to respond more effectively to the needs of families affected by drugs and alcohol misuse.
- Families have better access to, and information on, the services and supports available to them across the region.

Key Actions:

- Organise seminars/conferences to raise awareness of the impact of drug and alcohol misuse on young people and families.
- Organise wellness/respice days for families in the region.
- Provide family support related training to professionals, including Women & Substance Use, Child-to-Parent Violence.
- Widely disseminate the Family Support Handbook to families and service providers across the region.

ORGANISATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

Goal

Develop the Task Force as an effective organisation working to best practice standards.

1 OBJECTIVE

Strengthen Task Force capacity to fulfil its mission by optimising existing resources and accessing additional resources.

OBJECTIVE 2

Strengthen Task Force processes which capture the impact of its services and programmes, and those of its funded projects.

OBJECTIVE 3

Support the professional development of staff and funded workers to maximise wellbeing and contribution to Task Force goals.

OBJECTIVE 4

Improve processes which strengthen communication and collaboration between staff, funded projects, funders and Task Force committees.

Key Outcomes

- Effective structures and governance processes underpinning the work of the Task Force.
- Motivated staff and funded workers with enhanced knowledge and skills, working as a cohesive team to best practice standards.
- Increased sharing of resources and good practice between internal stakeholders.
- Better understanding of the effectiveness of Task Force and funded projects programmes and services, leading to improved service planning and development.

Key Actions:

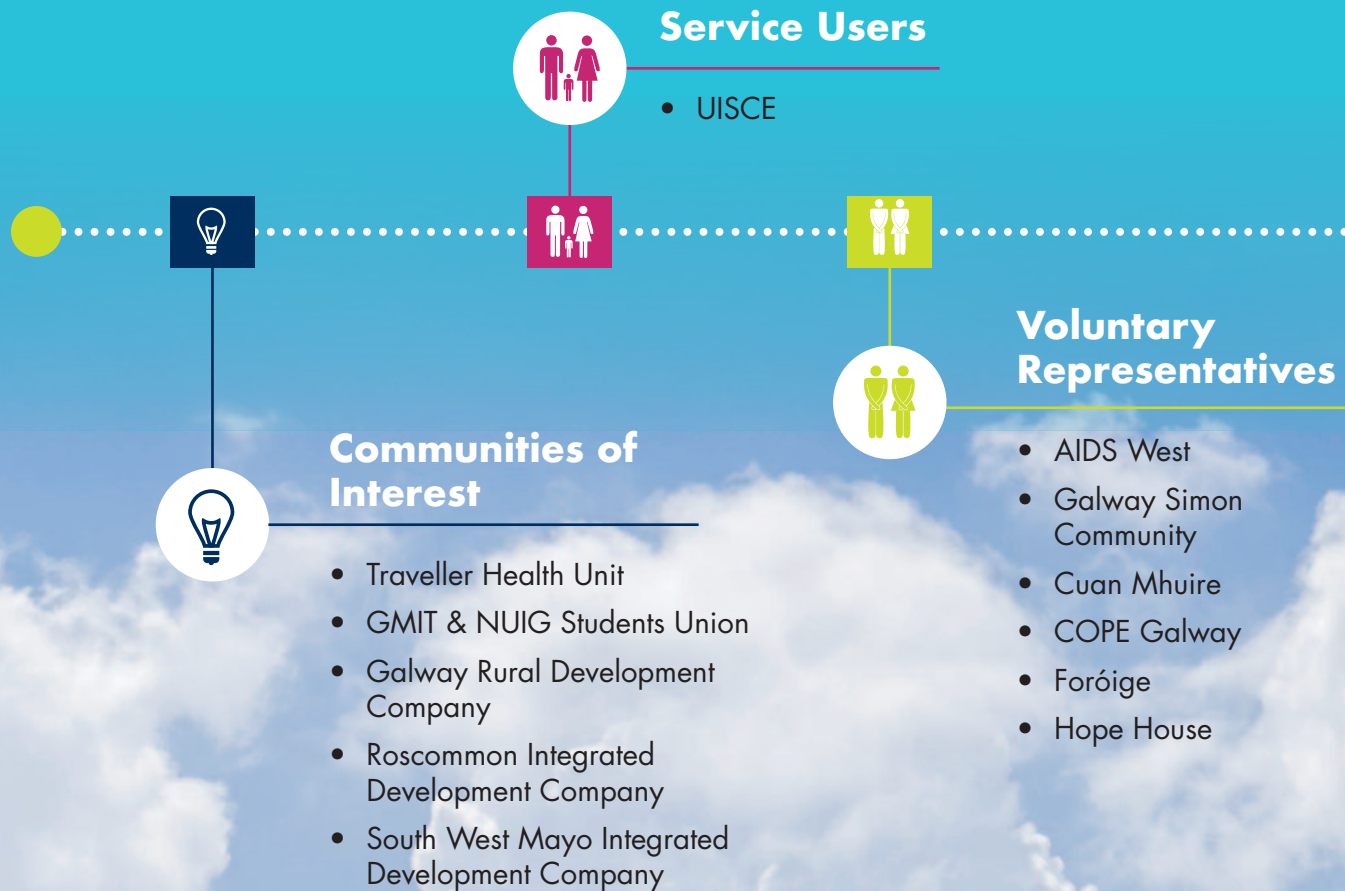
- Improve the functioning of the Task Force Committee and Sub-Committees.
- Review internal processes to improve communication between all stakeholders.
- Develop a framework to monitor and assess the impact of Task Force programmes and its funded projects.

Our Partners

The Task Force is a partnership of key stakeholders involved in addressing drug and alcohol issues across the Western Region. Our partners are represented on the Task Force Committee and Sub-committees, which are comprised of the community, voluntary and statutory sectors, service-users and public representatives. Through this committee structure, we work together to coordinate actions which prevent, reduce and respond to

drug and alcohol issues.

We facilitate communication between our partners and we promote the knowledge and experience of individuals and communities in designing and delivering effective local responses. The active participation and collective buy-in of all key stakeholders will be extremely important to the success of this strategy.





Statutory Representatives

- Health Services Executive
- Education & Training Boards (Galway, Mayo & Roscommon)
- Revenue Commissioners
- An Garda Siochana
- Tusla, Child & Family Agency
- Department of Social Protection
- The Probation Service
- Galway City Council
- Galway County Council
- Mayo County Council
- Roscommon County Council
- Irish Prison Service (Castlerea)



Public Representatives

- 4 Elected Representatives from the Western Regional Authority



Community Representatives

- Galway City Public Participation Network
- Co. Galway Public Participation Network
- Co. Mayo Public Participation Network
- Co. Roscommon Public Participation Network

Connecting To other Strategies

We are committed to promoting complementarity and consistency with other strategies and policy documents that have a bearing on drug and alcohol issues in the Western Region. By developing synergies with

these, we aim to maximise opportunities for collaboration, reduce duplication and improve integrated responses across the region. They include but are not limited to the following:



Implementing

Our Strategy and assessing our Progress

This strategy will be underpinned by an implementation and evaluation process to ensure the delivery of our goals and objectives. On an annual basis, we will develop an Annual Implementation Plan which will contain defined actions and appropriate performance indicators for the year ahead. The success of this strategy will be measured by the extent to which progress is made under these key performance indicators. In addition, we will endeavour to implement the National Drug Strategy *Reducing Harm, Supporting Recovery* 2017-2025 in partnership with other agencies

where Drug & Alcohol Task Forces are actioned to lead or partner on strategic actions.

We will ensure ongoing assessment of our work through a system of monitoring and evaluation which will measure our effectiveness and enable us to identify how to continually strengthen our programmes and services.

We will also work with our partners on the Task Force Committee to promote effective monitoring and evaluation of drug and alcohol responses across the region.





STRATEGIC PLAN 2017 - 2020

