

# TAKING STEPS

to Engage with Black and  
Minority Ethnic Communities  
and their Organisations on  
Issues related to Problematic  
Drug Use

Report  
**NIALL CROWLEY**  
October 2018



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# 1. BACKGROUND



# 1. BACKGROUND

## ABOUT CITYWIDE

Citywide Drugs Crisis Campaign is a national network of community organisations and community activists that are involved in addressing the drugs issue. It represents the community sector on the National Committees of the National Drugs Strategy (NDS).

### CONTACT

#### CITYWIDE DRUGS CRISIS CAMPAIGN

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CityWide has published research on structures and processes to engage with Black and minority ethnic communities on issues of problematic drug use.<sup>1</sup>

It concluded that:

- Policy and provision for problematic drug use have yet to respond appropriately and adequately to the needs of Black and minority ethnic communities.
- Problematic drug use is an issue for Black and minority ethnic communities and there are particular challenges around prevention and naming of the issue within these communities.

This report addresses steps that can be taken by policy-makers, service providers, drugs task forces and Black and minority ethnic community organisations in response.



<sup>1</sup> Crowley N., "Stimulating and Supporting a Black and Minority Ethnic Voice on Drugs Issues", CityWide, Dublin, 2017, available at: [https://www.citywide.ie/download/pdf/black\\_minority\\_ethnic\\_voice\\_on\\_drugs\\_issues\\_web.pdf?issuustl=ignore](https://www.citywide.ie/download/pdf/black_minority_ethnic_voice_on_drugs_issues_web.pdf?issuustl=ignore)



## 2. MUTUAL EDUCATION EVENT



## 2. MUTUAL EDUCATION

Mutual Education engages service providers and Black and minority ethnic organisations in a dialogue with each other. Information, ideas, and perspectives are exchanged. It further develops cultural competence of service providers and enables them to be better attuned to the particular needs of Black and minority ethnic communities. It further develops the capacity of Black and minority ethnic organisations to contribute to preventing and responding to problematic drug use in their communities and enables them to more effectively work with service providers. CityWide organised the first mutual education event in October 2017.

**Cultural difference** is a core focus in such a dialogue. Culture was identified as something that is both tangible and intangible and cultural differences are evident in:

- Behaviours, religions, and languages.
- Attitudes, judgements, values, and beliefs.

You can't teach a culture. Building cultural competence is about being able to communicate and work across cultural difference effectively. This is about more than dealing with language differences. There is a value in enabling people to tell their stories and for those stories to be heard.

There is always a danger of stereotyping if we don't acknowledge that cultures change and that there is diversity within all cultures. Culture needs to be acknowledged but without imprisoning people in a fixed understanding of what it involves.

Cultural difference has practical implications that need to be considered in responding to the needs of different communities. It was suggested that service providers need to:

- Engage differently.
- Provide interpretation in different languages.
- Understand the particular situation and experience of different groups.
- Communicate different messages and in different ways.
- Enable the voice of different groups to be heard.

Responses need to include for a dual strategy of service provision that directly targets Black and minority ethnic people and ensuring access for Black and minority ethnic people to general services. This ensures specific needs and circumstances are addressed and any forms of segregation are avoided.

Activities reported by **service providers** to reach Black minority ethnic communities include to:

- Make links with organisations that engage Black and minority ethnic people.
- Involve Black and minority ethnic leaders in planning and strategy.
- Outreach into Black and minority ethnic communities.
- Employ Black and minority ethnic people in service delivery.
- Start the engagement on a safe topic and build trust, which topic might not directly address the use of drugs.

- Use an ethnic identifier to track engagement.
- Use different languages in information materials.
- Review the make-up of the Drug and Alcohol Task Force for its diversity.
- Protect and build on the community focus in drugs policy and include Black and minority ethnic concerns as part of the community.

It was emphasised that **service providers** need to communicate the available services to **partner organisations from Black and minority ethnic communities**.

Mutual education could usefully continue through dialogue sessions in local areas, facilitated by Drug and Alcohol Task Forces. This would involve action to:

- ✓ Bring together providers of community drug services and Black and ethnic minority leaders for the session.
- ✓ Enable service providers to outline the range of services in the local area through dialogue and conversation.
- ✓ Create time and space to hear the stories of Black and minority ethnic drug users and invite other key people to hear these stories.
- ✓ Identify the barriers to Black and minority ethnic people using the services.

Service providers could usefully take steps to make sure the places where services are provided reflect and are friendly to cultural difference. They could follow the principle of nothing about us without us, by ensuring the voice of Black and minority ethnic communities is heard in decision-making, including on Task Force structures.

Cultural competence could be supported and developed in the provision of general services, such that service providers know how to communicate and work effectively across cultural difference. Any forms of racism in general service provision could be challenged. General service provision could be 'de-centred' so that all communities feel an ownership of the service and how it is delivered.



# 3. DEVELOPING CONNECTORS





# 3. DEVELOPING CONNECTORS

Organisational connectors enable service providers to more effectively engage and communicate with Black and minority ethnic communities. These are local organisations that have a strong relationship with and include members of Black and minority ethnic communities in their day-to-day work. They include schools, youth organisations, churches and minority ethnic businesses.

## 3.1 ORGANISATIONAL CONNECTOR MODEL 1



### ENGAGING & NETWORKING SCHOOLS AND YOUTH ORGANISATIONS

Youth organisations and schools in areas with high numbers of minority ethnic students and young people are valuable organisational connectors for Drug and Alcohol Task Forces and service providers. They offer channels of communication with Black and minority ethnic communities, particularly young people.

The Drug and Alcohol Task Force in Dublin's North Inner City engaged and networked schools and youth organisations as organisational connectors in making links with Black and minority ethnic communities<sup>2</sup>. Their experience informs this model.



### GOAL

The goal, in engaging and networking with schools and youth organisations, is the prevention of problematic drug use. Young Black and minority ethnic people are supported, in integrated settings, to:

- ✓ Access information in relation to problematic drug use.
- ✓ Explore and develop their thinking in relation to this issue.
- ✓ Build a network of supportive contacts on this issue.



### RATIONALE

Schools can have high levels of Black and minority ethnic pupils. Youth organisations have an informal reach into Black and minority ethnic communities and are often working on issues of problematic drug use. They both offer:

- ✓ Access to Black and minority ethnic young people;
- ✓ A range of formal and informal settings in which to engage with them.
- ✓ Contact with the parents and families of these young people.



### APPROACH

These organisational connectors are most effective where:

- ✓ The organisations, schools, youth organisations, and Drug and Alcohol Task Force, are effectively networked with each other.
- ✓ A community focus shapes the connections rather than an institutional or individual focus.
- ✓ Actions taken are proactive and positive rather than reactive or problem based.
- ✓ The ethos is one of a shared concern for empowerment and for harm reduction.

<sup>2</sup> With thanks to Fergus McCabe, chairperson Young People at Risk North Inner City, and Michael Kilbride, Home School Liaison O'Connell Secondary School for their assistance with this research.



## PROCESS: STARTING POINTS

### In the Drug and Alcohol Task Force:

- ✓ A Prevention Working Group leads engagement with the other organisations.
- ✓ The chair of this working group and the local standing of the chair is important in enabling access to the schools and youth organisations.

### In the schools:

- ✓ The school principal offers key support for the links to be made and pursued.
- ✓ The Home School Liaison Officer is the key entry point within the school.
- ✓ Local Home School Liaison clusters enable a coherent and effective area-based approach across a number of schools.
- ✓ Other teachers, including, in particular, Schools Completion Teachers and Behavioural Support Teacher play a supportive role within the school.

### In the Youth Organisations:

- ✓ A Black and Minority Ethnic Working Group takes leadership in assessing and addressing the level of participation of Black and minority ethnic people in the youth organisation and its activities.
- ✓ Activities are developed to create the culture and context needed for an integration of culturally diverse young people based on equality.



## PROCESS: KEY STEPS

### The Drug and Alcohol Task Force:

- ✓ Pursues outreach activities to engage with Home School Liaison Officers and to mobilise the support of school principals.
- ✓ Involves youth organisations in its structures and work processes.
- ✓ Runs a series of regular workshops aimed in particular at transition year students, including Black and minority ethnic students, that:
  - Provide information on the issue of problematic drug use and explore the views of the students, including Black and minority ethnic students.
  - Are coherent and consistent in their messages of harm reduction.
  - Recognise and take account of any practical implications of the cultural diversity among the students participating.
- ✓ Develops and disseminates accessible materials, that take account of the views of this diversity of young people, on supports available for problematic drug use.

### The Schools:

- ✓ Enable presentations from the Drug and Alcohol Task Force and relevant service providers on their work and services to different classes in the school.
- ✓ Motivate and enable students to participate in the workshops of the Drug and Alcohol Task Force, in particular Black and minority ethnic students.
- ✓ Bring in speakers for different classes on the issue of problematic drug use, through the Drug and Alcohol Task Force.
- ✓ Enable youth organisations and youth clubs to pitch their activities to different classes in the school, twice yearly.
- ✓ Enable and refer students to local youth clubs and specific activities of youth organisations, with particular attention to Black and minority ethnic students.



# 3. DEVELOPING CONNECTORS

- ✓ Facilitate the activities of youth organisations with access to school facilities.
- ✓ Establish formal structures for communication with local youth organisations and the Drug and Alcohol Task Force to share information and enable responses to issues arising for individuals.

## The Youth Organisations:

- ✓ Create the conditions for integrated activities, including:
  - Establishing distinct entry points for Black and minority ethnic young people with the potential to transition into existing integrated groups.
  - Building a culture of equality and celebration of diversity within the youth organisation and among all participants.
- ✓ Operate a specific 'Club' on a regular weekly basis as one key entry point, and as an ongoing targeted resource, for Black and minority ethnic young people.
- ✓ Produce and disseminate leaflets on their work in different languages directly targeting young people from Black and minority ethnic communities.



## PROCESS: EMBEDDING FOR THE FUTURE

The Drug and Alcohol Task Force includes its work of mobilising and engaging with organisational connectors such as schools and youth organisations in its annual plan.

Schools include their work as organisational connectors on this issue, with a particular commitment to Black and minority ethnic students, in school policies and procedures.

Youth organisations devise and implement internal policies on cultural diversity.



## CHALLENGES

The Drug and Alcohol Task Force, the schools and the youth organisations face challenges in developing and implementing this model, including the need to:

- ✓ Upskill staff and develop their sensitivity to recognise and take account of cultural difference and an ambition for equality in their work.
- ✓ Upskill staff in schools and youth organisations and develop their capacity to recognise and respond appropriately to issues of problematic drug use.
- ✓ Recognise and make best use of the different types of space each of the three types of organisation can offer young people in responding to these issues.
- ✓ Sustain the process over time, in a context of staff turnover and of funder and funding pressures on all the organisations involved.



## 3.2 ORGANISATIONAL CONNECTOR MODEL 2

### ENGAGING LOCAL DEVELOPMENT COMPANIES

Local Development Companies implement the Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP). SICAP aims to strengthen community development, provide education and training, and support employment. Local Development Companies act as hubs for local development and community development.

Cork City Partnership and the Cork Local Drug and Alcohol Task Force have worked together. Cork City Partnership has acted as an organisational connector in making links with Black and minority ethnic communities<sup>3</sup>. This experience informs this model.



## GOAL

The goal for cooperation between the Drug and Alcohol Task Force and the Local Development Company is to:

- ✓ Strengthen the connection with Black and minority ethnic communities;
- ✓ Secure the effective involvement of these communities in the work and processes of the Drug and Alcohol Task Force;
- ✓ Expand the resources available to respond to and prevent problematic drug and alcohol use within these communities.



## RATIONALE

The Drug and Alcohol Task Force has limited resources and a broad mandate. The Local Development Company provides an additional resource that can parallel and interconnect with the work of the Task Force. The Local Development Company with its broader development mandate offers a wider scope of intervention.

The Local Development Company has significant reach into the diversity of communities in its geographical boundaries, in particular through its community development function. It offers channels of communication and a variety of opportunities for engagement with Black and minority ethnic communities, in particular those experiencing disadvantage.

The Local Development Company provides opportunities for communities at risk and people coming through programmes responding to problematic drug or alcohol use to avail of education, training and employment programmes available and provided under its wider remit to address social exclusion and inequality.



## APPROACH

Engagement with such organisational connectors are most effective where:

- ✓ There is a relationship of cooperation and mutual respect between the Drug and Alcohol Task Force and the Local Development Company.
- ✓ There is a synergy of operation and effort achieved between the Local Development Company and the Task Force.
- ✓ The Local Development Company has independent resources for work on the issue and have connections with Black and minority ethnic communities.
- ✓ The approach to Black and minority ethnic communities is based on an understanding of the practical implications of cultural and language difference and involves a mix of access to general provision and targeted provision.

<sup>3</sup> With thanks to Mella Magee, Development Officer Community Outreach Drug and Alcohol Awareness Programme, Cork City Partnership for her assistance with this research.

# 3. DEVELOPING CONNECTORS



## PROCESS: STARTING POINT

The Local Development Company, in its role as a hub for local development and community development, secured HSE funding for a community outreach project addressing drug and alcohol awareness in the community in 1998. This came out of a community consultation process that identified the need for community involvement in the development of drug strategies. The project has evolved and now employs two staff in community drug and alcohol/community development roles. Based in the community development function of the Local Development Company, the project gains significant reach into different areas of disadvantage in the city.

The Drug and Alcohol Task Force at that time had no development worker and only had resources for a coordinator. The local development company project served as an important addition to its work. Since then the Drug and Alcohol Task Force has been enabled to employ a development worker.



## PROCESS: KEY STEPS

### The Drug and Alcohol Task Force:

- ✓ Provided interim funding for the Local Development Company to conduct additional training and awareness work in the city. As resources reduced the Task Force took on a portion of the additional awareness work and the interim budget ceased.
- ✓ Includes the Local Development Company project workers in the Drug and Alcohol Task Force Project Workers Network meetings it convenes. Information and training opportunities are shared and ongoing liaison is facilitated.
- ✓ Engages with the Local Development Company arounds its remit, recognising the centrality of community engagement in responding to and preventing problematic drug and alcohol use.

### The Local Development Company:

- ✓ Implements a community outreach programme aimed at preventing and responding to problematic drug and alcohol use that includes:
  - Education and Training: Supports access to formal and informal education and training, substance misuse prevention activities, and interventions to improve health and social outcomes. This includes training for volunteers working with people affected by problematic drug and alcohol use (FETAC level 5); family support interventions targeted at the concerned individuals; skills-based training for self-efficacy and resilience in families; and a community drugs and alcohol library.
  - Awareness: Promotes awareness of drug and alcohol related issues and signposting of information so that communities are aware of and empowered to access relevant supports. Actions include publication of Directory of Drug and Alcohol Services and information seminars and workshops.
  - Community Development: Facilitates community engagement with policy, practice and decision-making on matters that affect them, and supports communities to respond to substance related issues and emerging needs through capacity building with and networking among local groups and community representatives.
- ✓ Has a particular focus on minority groups in this work, including specific equality, inclusion and integration measures for Black and minority ethnic communities. As part of this work it:

- Supports Black and minority ethnic communities at risk to avail of education and training opportunities.
- Identifies and engages with these communities, in particular young people, to support group capacity, strengthen resilience, increase health and wellbeing, and reduce isolation.
- Enables groups within these communities to make links with influencers and funders to strengthen their work, including on responding to and preventing problematic drug and alcohol use.
- Supports the use of an ethnic identifier by service providers.
- Provides support for community representatives on the Drug and Alcohol Task Force. A new system for identifying the community representatives was devised to get an increase in and a balance of area based (5) and minority community (4) representation. This will secure representation from Black and minority ethnic communities through engagement with the Cork City Public Participation Network (PPN).
- Translated Directory of Drug and Alcohol Services into seven languages (Arabic, Spanish, Polish, Russian, Lithuanian, French and Chinese).



### PROCESS: EMBEDDING FOR THE FUTURE

The Drug and Alcohol Task Force will need to support culturally sensitive and appropriate service provision for and engagement with Black and minority ethnic communities. This requires an approach that includes mechanisms to track and support the engagement of these communities, including ethnic identifiers; outreach; awareness raising; targeted prevention activities; diversity sensitive signposting; culturally inclusive recruitment and induction of staff; cultural competence training for staff in all services; and equality proofing of plans and programmes.

The Local Development Company will need to continue to engage with Black and minority ethnic communities in preventing and responding to problematic drug and alcohol use to maximise positive health and social outcomes for these communities. More specifically it will need to develop supports and systems to enable the Black and minority ethnic communities' representative on the Task Force to engage effectively, through the PPN and other networks, to secure change for the wide range of communities represented, and to build accountabilities to these communities.



### CHALLENGES

The Drug and Alcohol Task Force and the Local Development Company face challenges in developing and implementing this model, including the need to:

- ✓ Ensure funders understand the need for a dual mainstreaming strategy with access to general provision and targeting with specific programmes to effectively respond to the particular needs of Black and minority ethnic communities.
- ✓ Secure resources that enable a framework for intervention that engages the full range of organisation required to achieve change.
- ✓ Locate their work with Black and minority ethnic communities within a wider integration agenda pursued across all public bodies and service providers.



# 4. POLICY MAKING





## An Intercultural Health Strategy that Responds to the Needs of People Involved in Problematic Drug Use from Black and Minority Ethnic Communities<sup>4</sup>

The Intercultural Health Strategy should specifically name the issue of problematic drug use among Black and minority ethnic communities, acknowledge the specific barriers they face in accessing services and dealing with the issue, and ensure adequate resources are made available to address this issue appropriately and effectively.

Problematic drug use is found to be an issue among Black and minority ethnic communities. There are low levels of take-up of services by Black and minority ethnic drug users. They face specific barriers to presenting including: lack of knowledge of services and of the issue of problematic drug use, isolation and lack of family support networks, legal status, community issues of shame and stigma associated with drug use, language barriers, the absence of targeted or outreach services, failure of services to take account of cultural difference, racism and lack of investment in integration.

The strategy should commit to ensuring that responses to Black and minority ethnic people involved in problematic drug use are both adequate and appropriate, with:

- ✓ The National Oversight Committee providing leadership and direction for an integrated interagency approach to problematic drug use among Black and minority ethnic communities.
- ✓ The Standing Sub-committee on Implementation and the Drugs Policy Unit providing support to Drug and Alcohol Task Forces to co-ordinate and progress work with Black and minority ethnic communities at local and regional levels.
- ✓ Regional and local Drug and Alcohol Task Forces supporting the implementation, through local community drugs projects, of outreach activities to Black and minority ethnic communities that support prevention and foster take-up of services as required. In particular, these activities need to:
  - Be community-based in engaging with organisations of Black and minority ethnic people in the area.
  - Be peer-led in employing Black and minority ethnic staff.
  - Make connections with institutions that have links with Black and minority ethnic communities, including schools, churches and youth services.
- ✓ Mainstream services taking steps to ensure they have a commitment and a capacity to be accessible to and to secure take-up from and outcomes for Black and minority ethnic people involved in problematic drug use. In particular, mainstream services need to:
  - Put in place an equality and diversity policy, that sets a standard of dignity, participation, and inclusiveness for the service, and make this policy publicly available.
  - Train all staff in cultural competence to build their capacity to understand and respond appropriately to cultural difference and to eliminate all forms of racism and discrimination.
  - Use an ethnic identifier and analyse the results of the data gathered to shape further provision.

<sup>4</sup> From submission to the HSE made by CityWide in October 2017, available at: <https://www.citywide.ie/resources/2017-intercultural-health-strategy-submission/>



The strategy should commit to ensuring the voice of Black and minority ethnic communities is heard in drugs policy and service provision, with:

- ✓ National, regional and local policy implementing creative and effective processes of consultation with and participation by Black and minority ethnic communities and their representatives so that they influence the making, monitoring, and evaluation of policy on problematic drug use.
- ✓ Regional and Local Drug and Alcohol Task Forces taking steps to:
  - Develop Black and minority ethnic representation in their structures.
  - Engage in mutual education with Black and minority ethnic communities.
  - Support Black and minority ethnic organisations to build their capacity to take up issues of problematic drug use in their work.
- ✓ The National Advisory Committee on Drug and Alcohol supporting research on problematic drug use with Black and minority ethnic communities.

The strategy should commit to ensuring Black and minority ethnic people involved in problematic drug use are enabled to build their recovery capital, with:

- ✓ The Department of Health working group on progression options for recovering drug users including Black and minority ethnic representation and establishing and addressing the particular needs of drug users from these communities.



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