



Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte
Health Service Executive

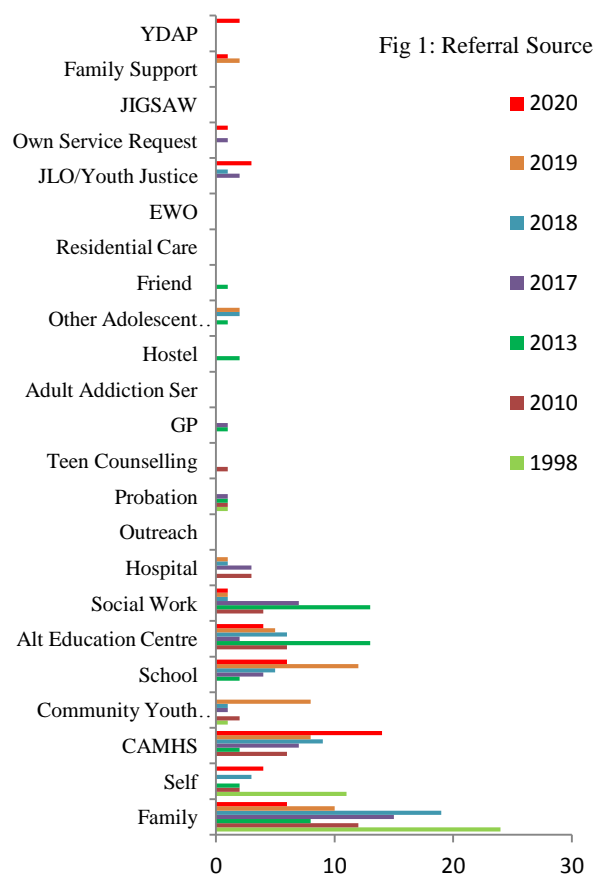
Adolescent Addiction Service Report 2021

In 2020 the Adolescent Addiction Service worked with 40 young people and their families with a mean age of 15.4 years (range 14-19 years). In comparison to 2019 referrals were down by 18%. However, the fall off in numbers has to be viewed in circumstances of Covid-19 pandemic with schools and other mainstream services closed for extended periods and with young people/families required to restrict their movements. As such key referrers were not having face to face contact with young people and were not in a position to identify issues and trends in the lives of young people. Additionally, a new referral source and resource to young people within Clondalkin and Lucan areas has been created with the establishment of a Tier 2 service operated by Cross Care in collaboration with Clondalkin/Lucan Drug & Alcohol Task Force and HSE Addiction services. This service is called Youth Drug and Alcohol Programme (YDAP) and is among a suite of services operated by Cross Care within community. The YDAP offers young people age 12-24 support around substance misuse and related issues to help them make more informed decisions and positive life choices. Similar to work in other communities the service will hopefully identify risk groups at an early stage and support young people to realize their aspirations and inhibit progression in relation to substance use.

The majority of referrals (82%) were male and 13% were Non-Irish nationals. Similar to previous year's referrals were received from a broad range of services including Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS), Schools, Alternative Education, Tusla, family members and young people themselves. See Fig.1 for a comparison with previous years.

The service continued to meet with young people and families face to face except for a couple of weeks during the initial stage of Covid-19 restrictions in March/April 2020

while the service put in place structures and procedures in order for service users to be able to access safely by installing hand sanitizers, replacing soft furnishings with chairs that can be wiped down and requesting that service users phone when they arrived at complex so as to avoid having to wait around in reception area. In accordance with Covid-19 guidelines service users were advised not to attend if they had covid-19 symptoms and masks were worn at times when proximity was less than two meters. Fortunately the service has a room large enough and long enough to allow for social distancing and ventilation. Families were treated as a bubble and as such could sit in close proximity to each other. For the period in which the service was closed a letter was sent to all service users advising of temporary closure and offering tips on how they can mind their mental/physical health and each other.



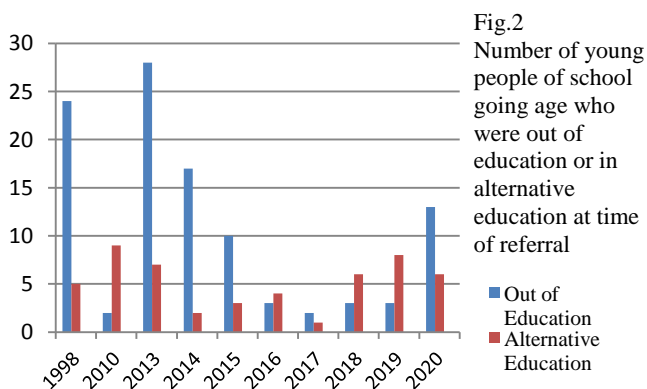
In addition to direct work with young people and families the service engaged in consultations with professionals and services about young people for whom there were concerns in relation to substance misuse and participated in meetings with Ballyfermot and Clondalkin communities around the abuse of nitrous oxide and made presentation as part of webinar on Young People & Substance Use

hosted by the Ballyfermot Local Drug & Alcohol Task Force. Additionally, the service contributed to teaching modules on HSE and University of Limerick, Diploma in Drug & Alcohol Studies and on Masters Programme in Addiction Recovery provided by Trinity College Dublin.

The numbers of young people attending the service of school going age, who were out of education/training at time of referral was difficult to ascertain due to school closures at various stages throughout the year, but numbers are recorded on basis of referral information, see Fig.2 for comparison with other years. For some young people participation in remote learning was an issue due to absence of technology.

The extent to which young people had previous/current contact with CAMHS was 59% compared to 39% in 2019. All attendees were known to a number of agencies and on average the service had contact with three other agencies on behalf of young people (range=1-4) in addition to other concerned persons. In most instances other services had remote contact with young people.

The extent to which substance misuse featured within families was slightly higher at 41% compared to 37% in 2019. The incidence of parental separation was lower at 34% compared to 47% in 2019 and 8% had one parent deceased. In terms of referral areas, the greatest numbers of referrals were from Clondalkin, followed by Lucan, Ballyfermot and while two referrals were received from outside of catchment area these referrals were directed to services in their own area. See Fig.3 for comparison with previous years.



Cannabis/Weed continues to be the primary substance of use with an overall use rate of 100% while Alcohol featured among 69% of

attendees. Other substances of use included Cocaine 26%, Benzodiazepines 24%, Amphetamines 7% and edibles such as cookies, muffins or jellies containing unknown substances 11%. Opiates did not feature except as a result of use of over the counter medication and was ceased upon advice. Solvents or Head Shop type products did not feature among young people's substance use and no young person admitted to having used Nitrous Oxide in spite of reports of use within communities. The biggest shifts concerning secondary drug use related to decrease in reported amphetamine use from 7% to 22% in 2019.

Other issues presented related to absconding, indebtedness and holding distributing or dealing drugs. Some young people had Social Work involvement and 39% had been assigned Juvenile Liaison Officer at some stage. The service submitted Child Protection Notifications and was to participate in Meitheal which was suspended due to Covid-19 restrictions. Additionally, the service flagged concerns for activity in some communities, especially the issue of young people being groomed to carry hold and distribute drugs.

The majority of young people 95% were seen by Family Therapist only, with 5% having Psychiatric Assessment and no young person was prescribed medication within the service and onward referral to CAMHS was progressed where indicated. As in previous years most young people had established patterns of substance use prior to referral and as a consequence some struggle to maintain drug free status but most achieve stability and several remain abstinent. As always the challenge within community is for parents and non-parental adults to identify young people within risk groups at early stage and to elevate concern for them.

