



An Roinn Sláinte  
Department of Health



# Advancing alcohol research in Ireland

Conference Programme

14 September 2023

# Advancing alcohol research in Ireland

## Introduction

The Health Research Board, in partnership with the Department of Health, is delighted to welcome you to the first “Advancing alcohol research in Ireland” conference. Our conference will bring together experts in the field of alcohol research to discuss evidence-based policy, existing and proposed legislation governing alcohol use, availability, and related harms. We will learn about policy monitoring in other jurisdictions, and the importance of research that is trusted and independent. This event will also provide practical information on how to use the HRB’s National Drugs Library and on potential sources of funding for research.

Our sessions will include:

1. Using research evidence to inform alcohol policy and practice
2. The international perspective: learning about policy development and monitoring
3. Carrying out your own alcohol-related research, and perspectives from the community

We encourage active participation and engagement throughout the conference. Panel discussions and Q&A sessions will offer opportunities for you to share your insights, ask questions, and contribute to the exchange of ideas.

We hope this conference will inspire collaboration, foster evidence-based decision-making, and ultimately contribute to the advancement of alcohol research in Ireland and beyond.



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## Programme Outline

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**9:30**

Registration opens

**10:00 – 10:15**

**Opening Address**

**Session 1: Using research evidence to inform alcohol policy and practice**

**10:15 – 10:35**

Keynote: Frank Murray

*The research evidence informing development and implementation the Public Health (Alcohol) Act - Reducing alcohol harms in Ireland. Back to the future.*

**10:35 – 10:55**

Helen McAvoy - *Existing and proposed legislation governing alcohol use*

**10:55 – 11:15**

Frank Houghton - *Ensuring independent and trusted research*

**11:15 – 11:35**

**Panel Discussion + Q&A**

**11:35 – 12:00**

Coffee Break

**Session 2: The international perspective: learning about policy development and monitoring**

**12:00 – 12:20**

Mary Dunne and Mairead Nelson, HRB National Drugs Library - *How to stay up to date with the latest national and international research*

**12:20 – 12:40**

Niamh Fitzgerald - *Building capacity for alcohol research and monitoring in Ireland*

**12:40 – 13:00**

Zubair Kabir - *Global burden of disease data – measuring and comparing alcohol-related harms*

**13:00 – 13:20**

Panel discussion and Q&A

**13:20 – 14:20**

Lunch

**Session 3: Carrying out your own alcohol-related research and perspectives from the community**

**14:20 – 14:40**

Anne Doyle - *National databases and surveys: What do they tell us and how can they be used to their full advantage?*

**14:40 - 15:00**

Catherine Gill - *Sources of funding for public health research*

**15:00 – 15:20**

Susan Calnan - *Perspectives on the response to alcohol-related harm in the community*

**15:20 – 15:40**

Panel Discussion + Q&A

**15:40**

Closing Address

# Speaker Bios

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## Professor Frank Murray

**Professor Frank Murray** graduated from University College Dublin, Medical School in 1980. He went on to pursue postgraduate medical and research training in Dublin, Boston, and Nottingham. For a span of 30 years, he worked as a Consultant Gastroenterologist/Hepatologist in Scotland and Ireland. Prior to that, Professor Murray held the positions of Registrar and President of RCPI, the largest medical post-graduate training body in Ireland. Professor Murray also acted as initiator and chairman of the Alcohol Policy Group in RCPI, and led the alcohol advocacy programme. Professor Murray played an advocacy role that contributed to the passage of the Public Health Alcohol Act in 2018. He initiated the EQUALS initiative which has evolved as a philanthropic joint venture between HSE and RCPI. This project delivers medical equipment and biomedical engineering training in Zambia. From April 2018 to November 2020, Professor Murray served as the Director of National Doctors Training and Planning at HSE. Currently, he is the of Chair for the European Association for the Study of the Liver (EASL) Alcohol Policy and Advocacy Group since 2022. Additionally, he is a member of the EASL Public Health, Policy, and Advocacy Committee. He is also acting as Chair of Alcohol Action Ireland and Chair of the Alcohol Health Alliance Ireland.

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## Dr Helen McAvoy

**Dr Helen McAvoy** graduated from Trinity College Dublin with a primary medical degree in 1997 and worked for several years in both hospital and general practice. She completed her MD in 2000 as part of the Masters in Health Promotion programme NUI Galway. She has worked on a number of government programmes relating to ageing and older people. She is now working as Director of Policy with the Institute of Public Health focusing on progressing the government's health inequality agenda in Ireland and Northern Ireland. In this role, she has contributed to a number of reports and policy papers on inequalities in maternal and child health, fuel poverty, tobacco, alcohol and inequalities in the border region.



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## Dr Frank Houghton

**Dr Frank Houghton** is currently Director of the Social Sciences ConneXions research institute at the Technological University of the Shannon. His disciplinary area is Public Health, with a focus on the geographical, social and behavioural dimensions of health. Frank was formerly the inaugural Chair of Public Health at Eastern Washington University in Spokane, WA. Frank has worked in Public Health units/ departments in State health services in both Ireland (MWHB/ HSE-West) and New Zealand (Tairawhiti District Health). He also has experience of the not-for-profit sector, having previously been Head of Research, Development & Education at Focus Ireland. Frank has particular interests in tobacco, alcohol and gambling control, as well as therapeutic landscapes, GIS, data suppression, multi-disciplinary public health, health inequalities, Athena SWAN and libraries. He was a founding member of the Research Ethics Committee in Limerick Institute of Technology (LIT) and is currently an active member of the National Research Ethics Committee on Medical Devices (NREC-MD).



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## Mary Dunne

**Mary Dunne** is a Chartered Information Specialist in the HRB National Drugs Library, Dublin. Mary's principal interest is enabling the use of evidence in decision-making. She has presented at numerous conferences and authored articles for library and drug-related publications. She was elected to the Register of the Chartered Institute of Information and Library Professionals (CILIP) in 2015 and the Register of Associate Members of the Library Association of Ireland in 2016. Her qualifications include a Masters in Psychology and a Masters in Information and Library Studies (Distinction).

LinkedIn: <http://ie.linkedin.com/in/LibrarianMaryDunne>



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## Mairea Nelson

**Mairea Nelson** is a Chartered Information Officer in the HRB National Drugs Library, a position she has held since 2010. Mairea's professional interests include social media as a dissemination tool and library impact. She has written articles and presented at many conferences. She has a Masters in Applied Social Research from Trinity College Dublin.

LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/mairea>



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## Professor Niamh Fitzgerald

**Niamh Fitzgerald** (@niamhcreate) is a Professor of Alcohol Policy and Director of the Institute for Social Marketing and Health at University of Stirling (Twitter: @ismh\_uos). Niamh is Deputy Director of the SPECTRUM (Shaping public health policies to reduce inequalities and harm) research consortium (2019-2024), with responsibility for impact, knowledge exchange and public engagement. Niamh specialises in mixed methods alcohol policy research with interests in retail premises licensing, minimum unit pricing, framing and public communication on alcohol and managing commercial interactions. Niamh is recognised internationally for her work on alcohol brief interventions, having advised WHO-Europe, Public Health Scotland and several European governments. Niamh originally trained as a pharmacist at Trinity College, Dublin and was awarded her PhD in 2003 by Robert Gordon University, Aberdeen. She has served on the Public Health Alcohol Research Group appointed by the Minister for Health in Ireland and is the lead author of the report produced by that group to guide the monitoring and evaluation of the Public Health (Alcohol) Act (2018). She co-led the UK-Ireland Alcohol Research Network (AcoRN).

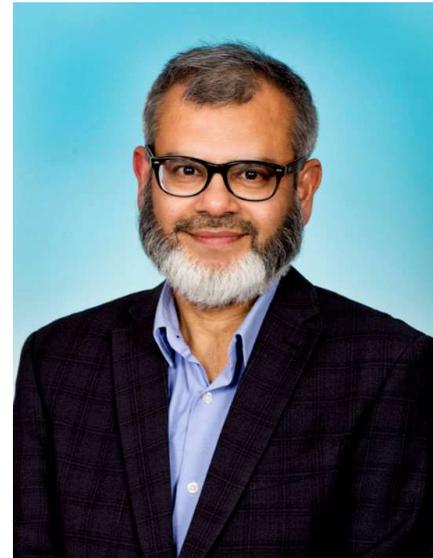
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## Dr Zubair Kabir

**Dr Zubair Kabir** was trained as a public health doctor from India; currently, a Senior Lecturer in Public Health advancing epidemiologic research and academic public health teaching in UCC and beyond. He is the academic director of the Master of Public Health (MPH) program in UCC. A lead researcher from Ireland on the Global Burden of Disease (GBD) Study- and has published widely in high impact journals, including the Lancet, Nature and BMJ, as a co-author. He has a special research interest in non-communicable disease epidemiology, tobacco control and alcohol policy, and has recently been appointed the Chair of the UCC Healthy Campus Action Group on Drugs, Alcohol & Tobacco. He has successfully led both national and international research grants. He is interested in research ethics, data protection, and consenting issues, and chairs the School of Public Health Ethics Committee. His next mission- a Greener Tobacco & Alcohol- Free UCC campus!



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## Anne Doyle

**Anne Doyle** is a Research Officer in the Health Research Board (HRB). Her work involves collating information about alcohol use and related harms in Ireland. She is passionate about promoting the use of this evidence to influence policy and practice to help reduce the harms associated with alcohol use.

Anne has co-authored the two most recent HRB overviews; 'Alcohol consumption, alcohol-related harm and alcohol policy in Ireland' and 'Alcohol and other drug use among children and young people in Ireland'.



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## Dr Catherine Gill

**Dr Catherine Gill** has managed diverse award portfolios in the Research Strategy and Funding Directorate since joining the Health Research Board. She is currently Programme Manager for ‘Targeted Programmes’, whose suite of activities and awards is guided by research needs and priorities of the Irish Health and Social Care system. She is HRB lead on the recently awarded Transforming Health and Social Care Systems (THCS) Partnership under Horizon Europe and represents HRB on the Joint Programming Initiative in Antimicrobial Resistance (JPIAMR). In addition, she has responsibility for grant policies related to research integrity and represents HRB on the National Research Integrity Forum (NRIF) and European Network of Research Integrity Offices (ENRIO).



With a background in cell biology, prior to joining the HRB Catherine spent eight as a researcher, most recently at University College Dublin. Catherine has a BSc in Biotechnology and a PhD in Molecular Biology from National University of Ireland, Galway.

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## Dr Susan Calnan

**Dr Susan Calnan** is a Post-doctoral Researcher at the School of Public Health, University College Cork. Her research interests include alcohol policy and alcohol prevention. Susan’s PhD research focused on evaluation of an alcohol prevention programme for college students in Ireland, known as REACT (Responding to Excessive Alcohol Consumption in Third-level). Recent research focused on public support for alcohol policy in Ireland and she maintains a strong interest in implementation of the Public Health (Alcohol) Act. Other research interests include illicit substances, implementation research and health promotion, including the Healthy Campus initiative for higher education institutions.



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## Session chairs

### Dr Nathan Critchlow

**Dr Nathan Critchlow** is an Academic Fellow for the Society for the Study of Addiction based at the Institute for Social Marketing and Health, University of Stirling. He specialises in analysing commercial determinants of health, the impact of marketing on health-related attitudes and behaviours, and how marketing is regulated. His fellowship research is examining the advertising restrictions implemented under the Public Health (Alcohol) Act.



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### Paula Leonard

Paula Leonard was appointed CEO of Alcohol Forum Ireland in April 2023, an independent charity which provides a range of supports and services to individuals, families and communities impacted by alcohol harm while working at the wider policy and advocacy levels to change Ireland's problematic relationship with alcohol. As the national lead for community action on alcohol over the past seven years there have been many positive developments including the establishment of the Irish Community Action on Alcohol Network; the development of resources, accredited training and advocacy on alcohol licensing as a tool to build safer communities; the initiation of the National County Alcohol profiling project and the development of the 'I-Mark: Supporting Independence from Alcohol Industry Influence'. The i-Mark is a growing social movement which provides a framework and a toolkit to challenge and counter the corrosive impact of the strategies of the alcohol industry. Having graduated with a Masters in Community Development, Paula initially worked in the area of peace building and reconciliation as part of the Peace Programme in Northern Ireland and the Border Counties and then spent many years working in the area of health inequality with the Irish Traveller and Roma communities. She is a passionate believer in the power and potential of communities to effect positive social change.

