

**PREVENTION AND EDUCATION
POLICY AND PROGRAMME
DEVELOPMENT**

**Produced by the Dublin North East Drugs
Task Force**

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Foreword

The material in this document is the result of a consultation process where members of the Prevention and Education Working Group, (which is a sub-group of the Task Force) met, discussed and shared ideas on the benefits, process and necessity of a Prevention and Education Programme for the Dublin North East Task Force Area.

The Dublin North East Drugs Task Force would like to thank the following for their input to the production of this document:

MEMBERSHIP OF THE GROUP

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DUBLIN NORTH - EAST DRUGS TASK FORCE
THE PREVENTION AND EDUCATION WORKING GROUP

PURPOSE OF A PREVENTION AND EDUCATION PROGRAMME

The purpose of a prevention and education programme in an area is to assist local groups already involved in community, education and youth work develop a policy on education and prevention and include this in their overall programme of work, with the aim of breaking the cycle of drug misuse in the area concerned.

DEFINITIONS OF PREVENTION AND EDUCATION

Definitions of education and prevention were explored by the Prevention and Education Sub-Group in its first meeting. The Prevention and Education Sub-Group agreed that a broad approach must be taken. That education and prevention means:

- working with those ‘who are in trouble and those who are not’,
- recognising the influences that social/class structures have on substance abuse,
- being aware of the level of acceptance/tolerance of the use/abuse of some substances,
- being aware of inclusion and exclusion issues,
- being aware of both micro issues - family and community and macro issues - social context and national policy,
- putting in place structures and policy.

In a recent paper on ‘Prevention and Education’ (1999) Fiona Murphy of the Edenmore Drug Intervention Team describes education as a process through which;

- people are made aware of the situation surrounding them in their community,
- barriers and prejudices surrounding addiction are broken down,
- factual information about various substances and their effects is provided and
- a forum for discussion is established giving people in the community an opportunity to ask questions, become aware of the situation and share their knowledge.

Education thus enables people to make informed choices about their attitudes and behaviour towards drugs and towards methods of prevention.

Prevention in turn must be viewed in a holistic way, taking into account:

- the factors which lead persons to engage in substance abuse,
- the impact of substance abuse on the families and communities immediately affected and the wider society.

The paper suggests that the main aims of prevention and education are to:

- Reduce acceptability and availability of drugs to young people,
- Reduce health risks and other physical and emotional damage related to drugs,
- Increase the safety of communities from drug related crime.

WHO NEEDS TO BE INVOLVED IN PREVENTION AND EDUCATION WORK?

There are a number of organisations working at community level providing the kind of services to young people and their parents which could be considered prevention and education work. The following are examples of these groups:

- ◆ Schools
- ◆ Voluntary clubs
- ◆ After school and Homework support clubs
- ◆ Community Youth Projects
- ◆ Parenting/education support
- ◆ Summer programmes in schools
- ◆ Community awareness on drugs
- ◆ Voluntary clubs - supported by Youth Service
- ◆ Mainstream youth work
- ◆ Environmental work
- ◆ Adult Education - VECs
- ◆ Community Development Programmes
- ◆ Youth Reach Community Training Workshops
- ◆ Home-school liaison programmes
- ◆ Gardaí/JLO's

COMMITMENT TO BEST PRACTICE IN THE DELIVERY OF PREVENTION AND EDUCATION PROGRAMMES

“Best Practice” in the delivery of the service involves the inclusion of those who may be considered key people in the overall initiatives. This may include consultation with Gardaí, youth workers or schoolteachers. It may be useful to include the above in an advisory capacity to the overall programme.

Another important consideration is the involvement of parents in the strategy. Parents have a central role to play in educating their children and consequently any prevention and education initiative should include an education policy aimed at adults to support them in a process of learning.

Research would suggest that drugs education in schools is most effective when teachers feel that support for the programme from parents and the community is available and forthcoming. Teachers implementing the programme should be supported with regular in-service training in the programme to maintain and improve their knowledge and skill base on the topic.

POLICY GUIDELINES FOR GROUPS INVOLVED IN PREVENTION AND EDUCATION WORK

It is imperative that the policies put in place to deal with drug misuse are *comprehensible*, *consistent* and implemented in a *structured manner*. Policy will depend on a number of factors:

- Who is being targeted
- How the policy is to meet the needs of the people in the group/organisation
- The type of policy to be introduced - preventative, referral, health and safety related, legislative.

The following steps may offer some assistance in putting in place policy guidelines. These could be added to/altered or they could be made more specific or general depending on the group/situation they are to be adapted to.

Policy Development for a Prevention and Education Programme

Researching your area

STEP 1

Researching your area is an important first step.

This will involve your group making contact with the groups operating in your community/area. Identify the groups through local knowledge or local directories (where available). We have listed who should or could be involved in Prevention and Education on page 4. Check through this list to see which organisations are working in your community/area and add those not listed on page 4.

STEP 2

Identify contact or key persons in each organisation, as referred to in Best Practice.

STEP 3

Decide on the process you want to use in order to promote Prevention and Education development within your area; will it be interview and information sharing with the groups or will you carry out research in the first instance by for example, questionnaire, or both?

A questionnaire to the groups could include the following:

- A.** Does your organisation currently have any policy on drugs/substance misuse?
 - a.1** If yes, is it useful?
 - a.2** If no, are you interested in developing a policy on drugs/substance misuse?
- B.** How are alcohol, tobacco or other drug related incidences currently handled in your organisation/school/club?

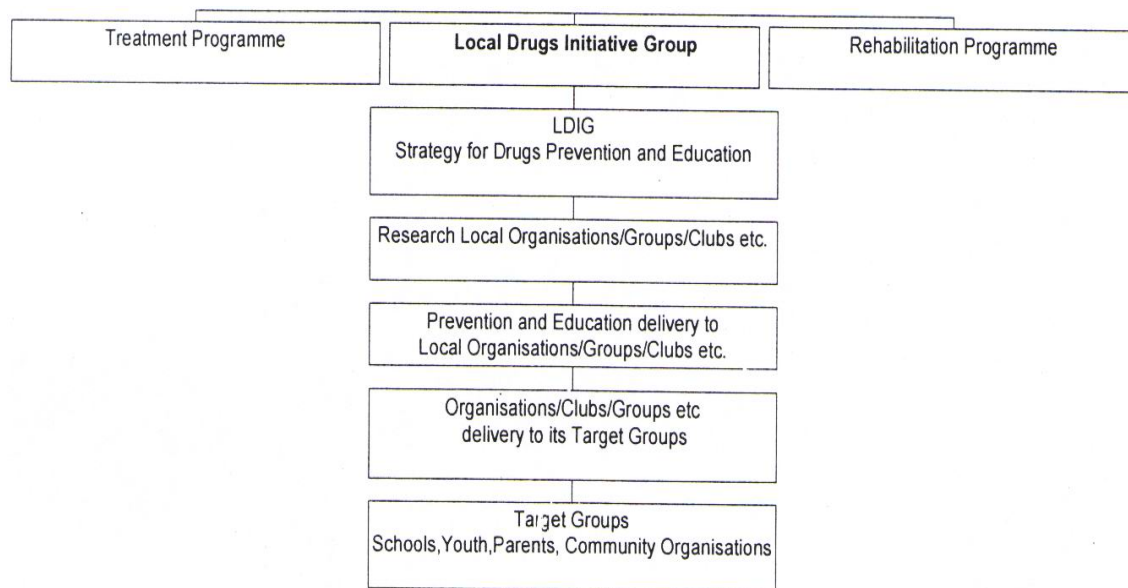
- C. Is there any drug education currently happening in your organisation/school/club etc.?
- D. Have you developed any policy on training for staff relating to drug misuse?

These are an example of the questions you might ask organisations working in your area. You may have other questions or need other information which will assist you in developing a Prevention and Education Strategy within your project.

You may see from the groups you have identified as a target for your intervention that they tend not to be directly involved in drug misuse/treatment issues. These groups are intermediary targets i.e. working with them will have a knock-on effect within the community. This knock-on effect is often called a ‘multiplier’, that is, if you target one person who has contact with 50 or 60 people, that person will carry the information to the 50 or 60 people he or she has contact with.

It is important to think about your target group and the group that they will share the Prevention and Education information with.

The diagram below shows the flow of the Prevention and Education process in a community.



As you can see from the diagram above, the process of a Prevention and Education programme filters right through the community until it reaches the final group which is parents and families.

The work of the very first group (L.D.I.G.) is to have a coherent, cohesive strategy around Prevention and Education policy within its own project. You may need to do this work before starting out to work in the wider context.

These following questions may be of value in your appraisal of your own project.

1. How many people are affected in the community?
 - 1 a. How many new cases are there and how often do they appear?

This information may be based on your local knowledge and the experience of who uses the current available facilities and who does not use them.

2. How do you expect the drug misuse situation to develop in your area if there is nothing done about Prevention and Education?
3. What are your projects policies on:
 - Prevention and Education training within the project,
 - How are drug related incidents processed within the project,
 - What are the criteria for staff/volunteers/managements models of practice in relation to drugs/substance misuse?

Any project drawing up a Prevention and Education Programme will need to have a clear, worked out policy for itself before embarking on developing policy in the wider area.

A Project that decides to build in a Prevention and Education Programme to its activities needs to clarify the following:

1. What staff will actually be required to do the work and what qualifications will they need?
2. How much of the project's time will this programme require?
3. What will be the budget for the programme and what other resources are available i.e. administration, rooms, material etc?
4. What will be the hindering forces that may work against the implementation of a Prevention and Education Programme?
5. What will be the helping forces that will work for the success of a Prevention and Education Programme?
6. What evaluation process will be put in place which will inform us of the effectiveness of our programme on Prevention and Education?

Overall Development Strategy

