

MID-WESTERN
HEALTH BOARD

29 October 2002

**To: Chairman & Each Member
Mid-Western Health Board**

Report No: 83/02
Item No 8 on Agenda

**Report for Meeting of the Board to be held
on 8th November, 2002.**

Report on Drug Service/Drug Use in the Mid-West Region

Dear Member,

The following is a report on the Drug Service and Drug Use in the Mid-West Region.

It is envisaged that this Report will form part of a future document on Drug Use in the Mid-West Region for 2002.

Introduction

The MWHB have over the last number of years endeavoured to develop pro-active, client centred services in relation to substance misuse in the Mid-West region.

Addiction counsellors have been part of the multi-disciplinary Adult Mental Health teams for a number of years and within the last 4 years specified programmes have developed targeting youth at risk and illicit substance users.

The A&E research was commissioned in 2001 with the purpose of attaining solid information in relation to alcohol and/or drug related presentations.

Previous research undertaken in 1998 into young people's attitudes to drugs/alcohol and tobacco had enabled us to get a clearer picture of the issues relevant and likely to impact on service development. The Board has also collected research for the National Drug Treatment Reporting System (NDTRS) in relation to treated drug misuse. This data is collected by the Regional Co-ordinator through the Regional Drug Co-ordination Unit and the aggregate data is compiled by the Health Research Board.

The typical client presenting for drug treatment is male, in his late teens or early twenties and living in the family home. Table 1 shows the increase in the number of drug users presenting for treatment in the MWHB area from 1996 to 2001. Table 2 gives a breakdown of the main drug of misuse for individuals presenting for treatment.

This data does not include individuals who presented for treatment of alcohol problems, however since January 2002 this information has also been collected by the Board.

Table 1. Number of Treatment Contacts

<u>Year</u>	<u>Total treated in MWHB</u>
1996	83
1997	210
1998	200
1999	281
2000	327
2001	424

Table 2. Main Drug of Misuse for Individuals Treated in the MWHB Area

<u>Main drug of misuse</u>	<u>1996</u>	<u>1997</u>	<u>1998</u>	<u>1999</u>	<u>2000</u>	<u>2001</u>
Opiates	27	68	69	84	87	113
Cocaine	1	4	13	3	12	21
Ecstasy	18	39	24	21	26	35
Amphetamines	1	13	11	8	3	3
Benzodiazepines	1	10	11	6	7	3
Volatile Inhalants	1	6	1	7	8	8
Cannabis	27	58	66	146	172	219
Other Substances	7	12	5	6	12	22
<i>Total</i>	83	210	200	281	327	424

A survey by the Union of Students in Ireland showed that 51% of students in Ireland take illegal drugs, with 66% of students who have taken illegal drugs having had their first such experience in secondary school.

All research to date shows a steady increase in both numbers presenting for treatment, types of substances being used and availability within the Mid-Western Region. To address this the following interventions have developed:

- Primary Care Drug Assessment Unit
- Outreach Service
- The Drug and Alcohol Helpline
- Child and Adolescent Counselling Service
- Community Counselling Services

Primary Care Drug Assessment Clinic

The primary care drug assessment unit was set up in May 2001 to meet the needs of clients presenting with opiate related difficulties. The clinic, which is based in Limerick City and operates two days a week, provides methadone treatment, counselling and health intervention for clients who are opiate dependent. The treatment philosophy is one based on harm minimisation and harm reduction work is ongoing while clients are engaged in treatment.

Table 1 shows the number of clients who have used the Methadone clinic in 2001 and the first four months of 2002. After 16 months, a total of 48 clients had attended the Primary Care Drug Assessment Clinic.

Performance Indicators for Addiction Services state that drug misusers should be assessed within three working days and offered treatment as deemed appropriate not later than one month after assessment. Patients are assessed upon presentation at the Primary Care Drug Assessment Clinic and figure 2 shows that the average time between assessment and commencement of methadone treatment has decreased from 29.3 days in June 2001 to 7 in August 2002.

Table 3. Primary Care Drug Assessment Clinic client assessments

	May '01	Jun '01	Jul '01	Aug '01	Sep '01	Oct '01	Nov '01	Dec '01	Jan '02	Feb '02	Mar '02	Apr '02	May '02	Jun '02	Jul '02	Aug '02
Number of initial client assessments undertaken by methadone service per month.	2	6	5	3	2	4	4	1	4	2	2	2	3	6	1	1
Cumulative total of clients undertaken by methadone service	2	8	13	16	18	22	26	27	31	33	35	37	40	46	47	48
Average time between completion of assessment and commencement of methadone treatment. (In days)	29	15.8	7	5	4.5	10	5	6	6	5	7.5	7	4.5	6	6	7

Figure 1. Cumulative total of clients undertaken by methadone service

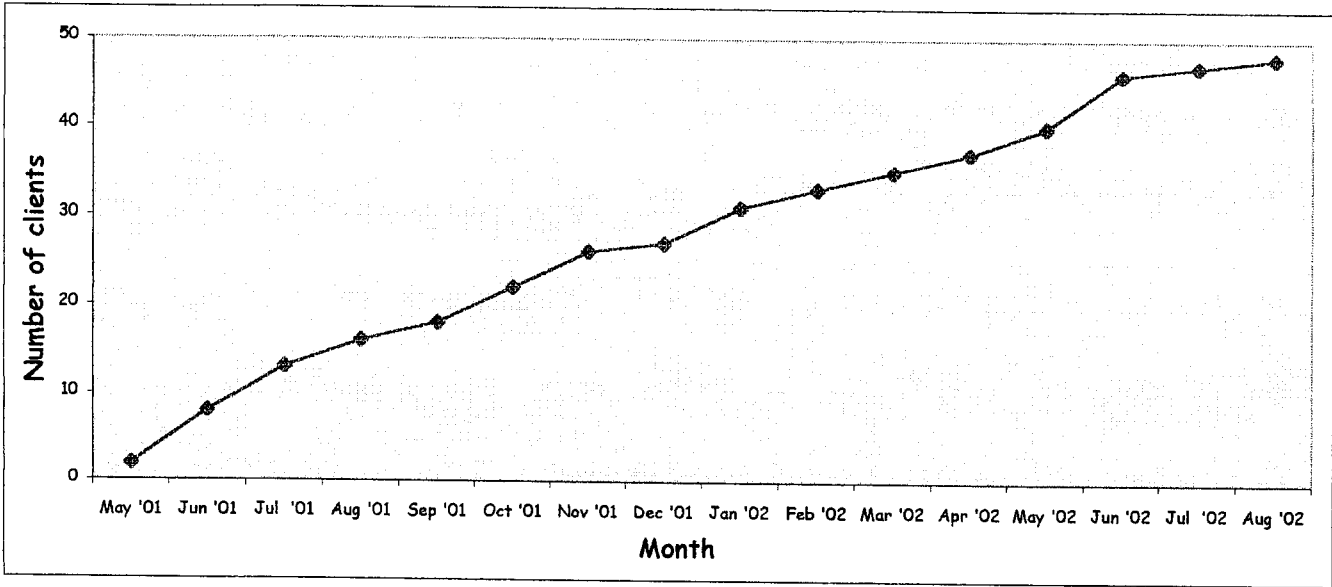
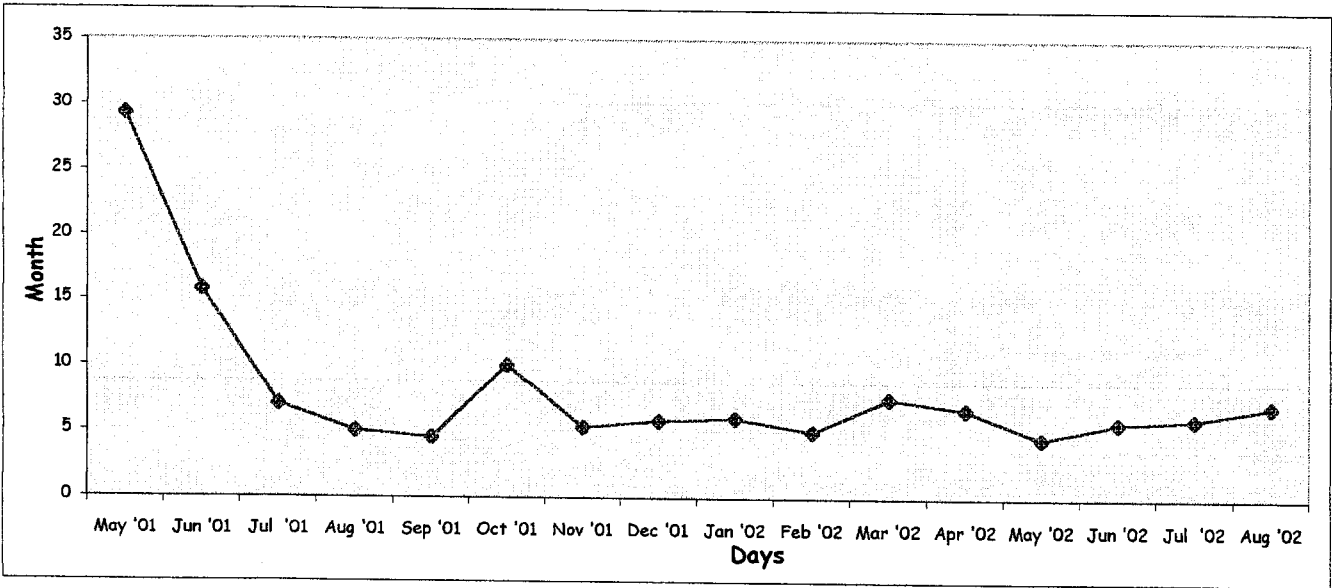


Figure 2. Average time between completion of assessment and commencement of methadone treatment. (In days)



Regional Drugs Coordination Unit - Drugs Outreach Work

An outreach service was initiated in Limerick County in 2001 and developed in 2002 as a result of the National Drug Strategy 2001 – 2008. Three Outreach Workers have been appointed to encompass the areas of Limerick, North Tipperary and Clare. It is envisaged that they will act as a first point of contact for people concerned about their drug use or that of a family member or friend. Assessment, advice and information will be provided with referral on for counselling if appropriate. Another aspect of the role is to respond to communities concerns about drug use and through training and education, develop community-based infrastructures addressing drug related issues pro-actively and with principles of good practice. The outreach workers have been involved with over 92 groups in Co. Clare, Limerick and North Tipperary. A breakdown of the type of groups seen is detailed below:

Table 4. Breakdown of Groups in contact with MWHB Drugs Outreach Workers

<u>Outreach Work Contacts</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Community Council	6.3%
Community Group / Development Project	12.5%
Counselling/Advice Service	10.9%
Drugs Project	3.1%
Early School Leavers	6.3%
Education and Training	12.5%
Gardai/Courts/Probation	4.7%
Parents' Group	3.1%
Residents' Association	3.1%
Resource Centre	4.7%
Social Services	3.1%
Travellers Training Service	3.1%
Treatment Centre	4.7%
Women's Group	1.6%
Works with refugees and Asylum Seekers	1.6%
Youth Group / Project	18.8%

Sláinte Drug and Alcohol Helpline

The Sláinte Drug and Alcohol Helpline was set up in 1999 to provide information and advice to drug users, family members, communities and other professionals in relation to substance misuse. It operates Monday to Friday from 2-5pm and operates as a first point of contact for any individual or agency experiencing drug or alcohol-related difficulties. Information, guidance and support are provided via a Helpline, which act as a 'signpost' to other services including treatment options and support groups throughout the region of Clare, Limerick and North Tipperary.

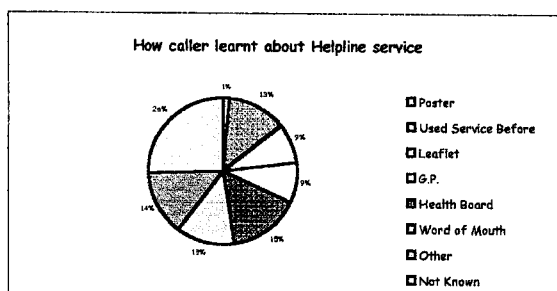
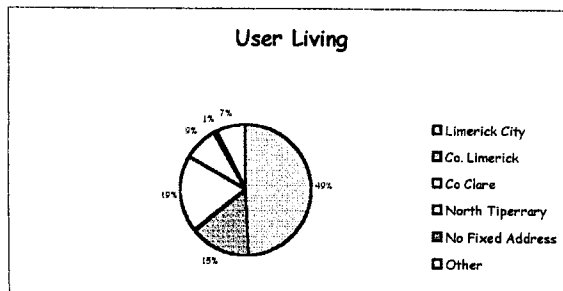
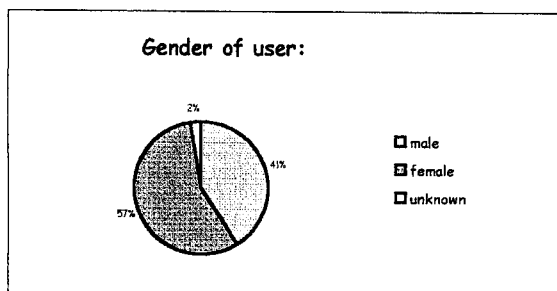
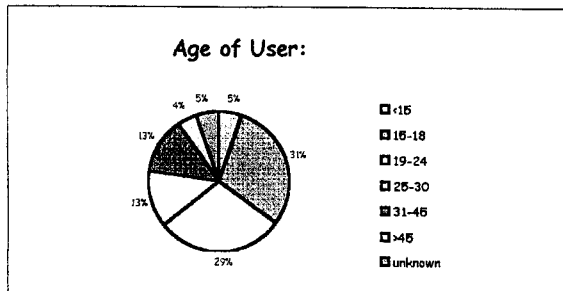
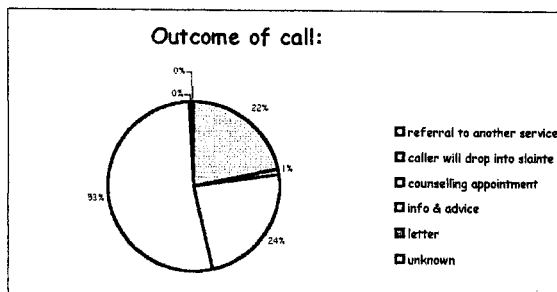
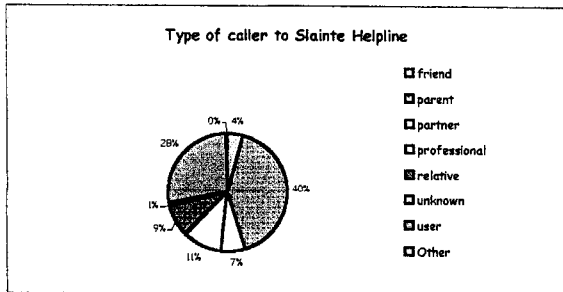
Contacts to the Helpline have been steady since its inception:

Jan – Dec 1999: 265

Jan – Dec 2000: 244

Jan – Dec 2001: 247

The following figures give a detailed breakdown of calls taken by the Sláinte Helpline in 2002:



Adolescent Counselling Service

The Drug and Alcohol adolescent service was initiated in 1999 and added to in 2002 with the recruitment of an additional counsellor who is seconded half time to the Child Psychiatry Team. The service provides a first point of contact for individuals, families and agencies with concerns in relation to drug or alcohol use. The service is available Monday to Friday 9:30am to 5:00pm with evening appointments on Thursdays to facilitate those working, at school or at college. Crisis appointments are also offered.

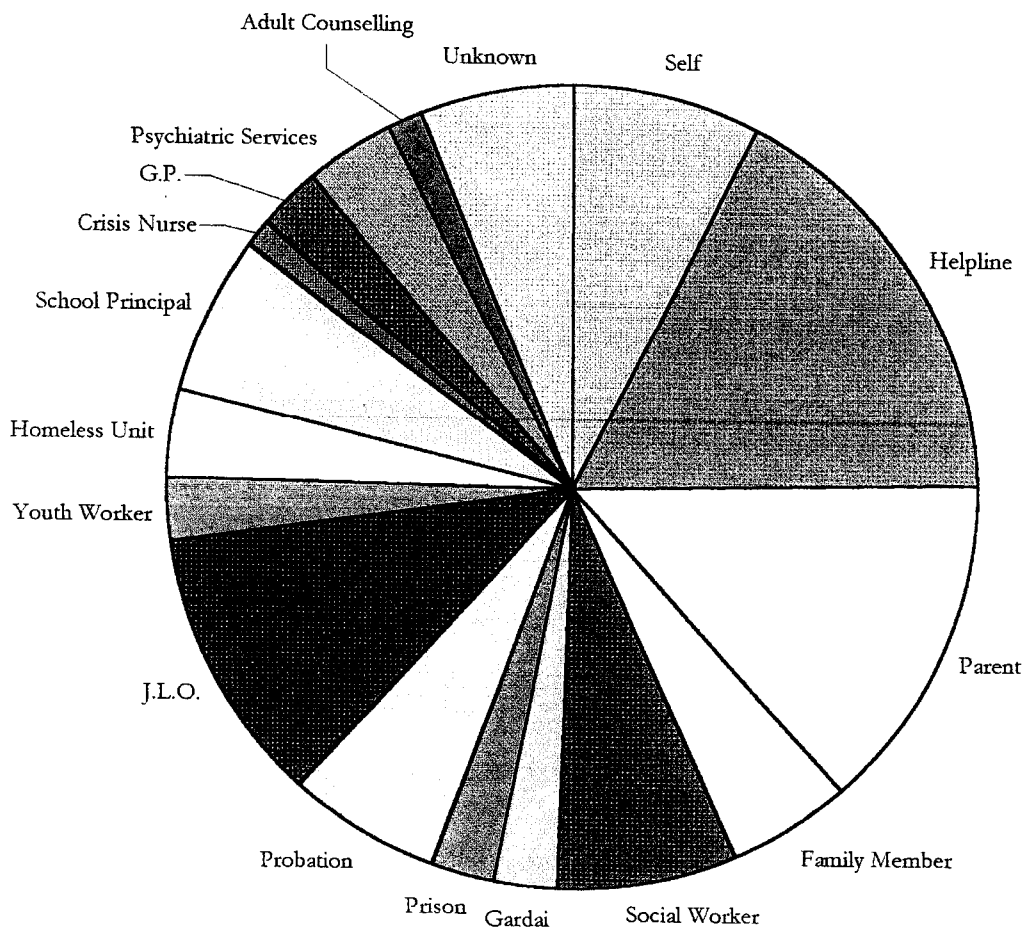
The accessibility of the counselling service and the high incidence of individuals and family requiring counselling is reflected in the numbers of people utilising the service.

Table 5. Total number of presenting to adolescent counselling service individuals:

Year	Total
2000	104
2001	114
2002	86 (Jan-Sep)

There were 86 referrals to the Adolescent Counselling Service between Jan-Sep 2002. In addition, 12 clients who received counselling in 2001 were carried through to this year. While 19 people were given appointments and did not show, 2 clients were unsuitable and were referred back to Child Psychiatry or Youth Centre. Figure 3 gives a breakdown of the source of referrals to the service.

Figure 3. The origin of referrals to the Child and Adolescent Counselling Service.



Community Counselling Services – Co. Clare

An outreach service was developed in Co. Clare in 2002 as a result of the National Drug Strategy 2001 – 2008. The outreach worker, who is based in Ennis, acts as a first point of contact for people concerned about their drug use or that of a family member or friend. Assessment, advice and information will be provided with referral on for counselling if appropriate. Another aspect of the role is to respond to communities concerns about drug use and through training and education, develop community-based infrastructures addressing drug related issues pro-actively and with principles of good practice.

The table below shows a breakdown of the types of areas where the outreach work is concentrated. Over 45 groups in Co. Clare have liased with the service since August 2002.

Table 6. Groups in contact with Co. Clare Outreach Service

Addiction Counselling Service	Parents' Council
Adult Education Training	Rehab
Advice Service	Residents' Association
Child Protection Workers	Resource Centre
Community Council	Social Workers
Community Dev. Organisation	Supports Women's Groups
Counselling Service	Training Service for 15-18 yr olds
Early school leavers project	Travellers' Development Worker
Education and Training	Travellers' Training Service
Education for People with Disabilities	Works with Long Term Unemployed
Helpline	Works with refugees and Asylum Seekers
Home School Liaison Officer	Youth Group
Juvenile Liaison Officer	Youth Justice Project
Kilrush Family Resource Centre	Youth Training Project

A full time Addiction Counsellor was recruited in September 2002 and Performance Indicators from this service will be available for the next Quarter.

Community Counselling Services – Limerick

The counselling and outreach services were established in Limerick City in September 2001 and extended to Co. Limerick. A treatment and information service is provided to all community groups, individuals and anyone in this region concerned with drug related issues.

The outreach service provided information sessions and presentations to over 20 groups in the Limerick City and Co. Limerick region between September 2001 and September 2002. A representative list of these groups is given in the Table 7.

Table 7. Groups liaising with the Limerick City and County Outreach Service

Red Ribbon Project	Abbeyfeale Traveller Response Group
Rehab	Community Development Group
Sexual Health Promotion / HIV Prevention	Community Group concerned about drugs
Southill Outreach Project	Cuan Mhuire Treatment Centre
Southside Young Men's Project	Early Release Programme
Tir na Droichead	Early School Leavers, 18-25 yrs
Travellers Group for Women	FAS
West Limerick Resources	Kilmallock Traveller Response Group
Work Training Scheme	Limerick Prison
Youth Group	Moyross / St Munchins 'Northside Initiative'
Youth Justice Project	Rathkeale Steering Group
Youthreach	Women's Group

The Community Counsellor for Limerick works half time with the Sláinte Service and half time with Child Psychiatry. Since the counsellor began in August 2002, there have been 5 referrals to the service. A breakdown of ages is provided in Table 8.

Table 8. Age Breakdown of clients presenting for counselling through the Sláinte Service

<u>Age</u>	<u>Frequency</u>
14	1
16	2
17	1
>20	1
Total	5

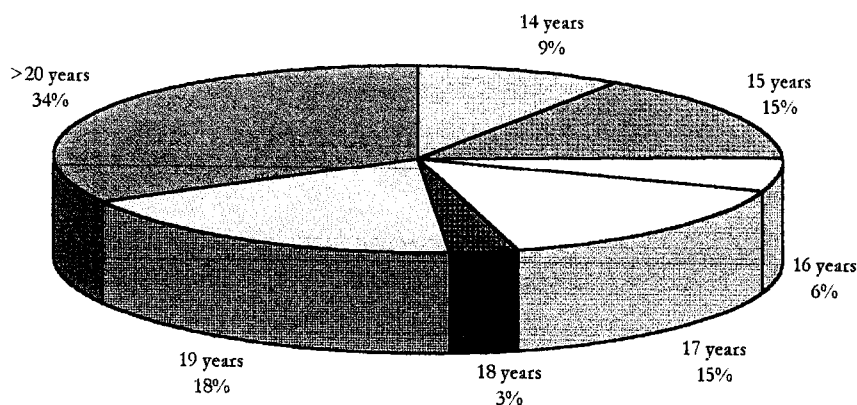
Community Counselling Services – North Tipperary

The North Tipperary Community Drug Service was established in September 2001. While the administrative centre for the North Tipperary region will be located in Nenagh, currently the service operates from the Regional Drug Coordination Unit in Limerick. A treatment and information service is provided to all community groups, individuals and anyone in the North Tipperary region concerned with drug related issues. Services provided include Outreach Service; Counselling Service; Information Service (individual and community); Community Resource; Network and Liaison Service to other Health Board professionals and voluntary bodies.

Between September 2001 and September 2002, a total of 33 individuals were referred to the North Tipperary Drugs services for counselling. A breakdown of ages of those in counselling is provided in Table 9. Family counselling was also provided for the parents and other family members of those referred to the service. 21 individuals availed of this facility.

Table 9. Age Breakdown of clients presenting for counselling

Age	Frequency
14	3
15	5
16	2
17	5
18	1
19	6
>20	11
Total	33



The addiction counsellor liaises with schools, GPs and the prison and also attends case conferences and court appearances on behalf of clients. In addition to this, both the outreach and counselling services provided information sessions and presentations to over 50 groups in the North Tipperary region. A representative list of these groups is given in the table 10.

Table 10. Groups in contact with the North Tipperary Counselling and Outreach Service

North Tipperary Social Services	Al Anon
Child Psychiatry	Community Workers – Loretto House
North Tipperary Child Care Team	County Development Board
North Tipp. Mental Health Team	Drug Task Force Meeting
Nenagh Anti Drugs Community	N.A. Nenagh
Templemore U.D.P.	BAND
Thurles U.D.P.	Nenagh Community Network
Nenagh U.D.P.	Our Lady Of Lourdes Weston
Gardai Training College	Roscrea 2000
Community Gardai - North Tipp	Templemore Drugs Awareness
Juvenile Liaison Officer – Nth. Tipp.	Templemore Youth Service
Probation And Welfare	Tipperary Regional Youth Service
St Josephs secondary school	Young Nenagh Project
Tipperary Institute, Thurles	Youth Development Project
Under 18 Addiction Group	School Counsellors

Summary & Conclusions

The misuse of drugs or alcohol and the attendant dangers of addiction development is a complex psycho-social problem. A multi-faceted response is required making due allowance for a range of individual needs.

All modern approaches to prevention emphasise the need for the introduction of appropriate interventions early in life. They should also be ongoing, consistent and socially re-inforced. Treatment interventions should reflect the needs and capacities of the individual clients. The goals of any treatment intervention can include, abstinence, improvement of health and welfare of the individual and harm reduction.

Rehabilitation/re-integration programmes should be a major part of this continuum of care and enable individuals to become and re-establish themselves within their community.

The National Drugs Strategy 2001 throws up many challenges for the coming years and the Drug Service within the Mid-Western Health Board will be working closely with the client, family, community, statutory agencies and community/voluntary groups to meet and achieve these targets.

Yours sincerely,

James Conway
Assistant Chief Executive Officer