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# HIGH AWARENESS

**County Wexford Community Based Drugs Initiative**

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## Foreword

The County Wexford Community Based Drugs Initiative (C.B.D.I.) was established in 2000, managed by the Ferns Diocesan Youth Service and funded through the South Eastern Health Board.

The countywide project involves four C.B.D.I. committees, New Ross, Gorey, Wexford and Enniscorthy. The involvement of local people in the fight against illegal drugs is now recognised as critical in this issue. The C.B.D.I. adopts a multi-agency approach and welcomes involvement from local people, parents, young people, volunteers and representatives from voluntary and statutory agencies, e.g. Probation and Welfare Service, Gardai, F.D.Y.S., S.E.H.B., C.D.P., Housing Section and community workers.

The role of the C.B.D.I. is to develop responses to local issues of substance misuse through raising awareness, and to develop strategies to reduce demand. The C.B.D.I. link with the Regional Drugs Task Force, which works in the area of education, prevention, research and treatment.

In the course of this piece of research, the Enniscorthy C.B.D.I. had focus group discussions with young people in secondary schools in the Enniscorthy area. The aim of the focus groups was to gather information on current issues affecting young people. The group designed a questionnaire and with the help of young people in all of the secondary Enniscorthy town schools, a research piece was completed.

The aim of the survey is to

- Ascertain the nature and extent of drug and alcohol use/misuse in Enniscorthy
- To learn what services are available and what the gaps are
- To find out the needs of young people

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## Glossary of Terms

For the purposes of this report the term 'drug' refers to any mood altering substance, whether legal or illegal, including cigarettes and alcohol.

<b>Acid</b>	An hallucinogenic drug which comes either in pill form or impregnated on a piece of blotting paper.
<b>Alcohol</b>	One of the most commonly used drugs of them all, alcohol comes in many different forms, such as wine, beer and spirits.
<b>Amphetamine</b>	Generally comes in powder form and is snorted up the nose. It can also be taken in tablet form or be injected.
<b>Anabolic Steroids</b>	Most synthetic anabolic steroids on the market are derived from testosterone. They have a building up effect on the body in that they promote the build up of muscle tissue and increase body weight.
<b>Cannabis</b>	One of the most commonly used of all illegal drugs. It can be found in a herbal form, a resin, powder or oil. Cannabis is often referred to as "pot", "hash", "weed", "dope" or "blow".
<b>Cigarettes/ Tobacco</b>	Tobacco is derived from the leaves of the plant - <i>nicotiana tobacum</i> . It contains nicotine, which affects the heart, blood vessels, stomach, kidneys and central nervous system.
<b>Cocaine</b>	Cocaine is often called "smoke" or "snow". It is a white crystal like odourless powder. Cocaine is normally sniffed but it may also be injected. Crack is a cheaper version of cocaine, which is smoked.
<b>Ecstasy (E)</b>	The main ingredient in "E" is a chemical substance called MDMA, and this is often mixed with other substances such as amphetamines or tranquillisers. Ecstasy is often used in expectation of its pleasurable effects.
<b>Heroin</b>	Heroin most commonly comes in the form of a white powder, which is either injected or smoked.
<b>Tranquillisers</b>	There are literally thousands of different prescription tranquillisers on the market and they generally come in tablet or capsule form.

*Information provided by the Health Promotion Unit.*

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## Executive Summary

### Introduction

This research was undertaken by the Enniscorthy Community Based Drugs Initiative.

The purpose of the research was to form the basis for the action plan of the C.B.D.I. based on the experience and needs of young people, as articulated by them. The information obtained will enable the C.B.D.I. to direct their work and this report will provide a resource when working with young people and adults in the Enniscorthy area. It will also provide a tool for lobbying on behalf of young people and their families.

### Method

Questionnaires (quantitative) and focus group discussions (qualitative) methods were used in this research. The questionnaire was devised and focus group discussions facilitated by Enniscorthy C.B.D.I. members. These methods were used to obtain information from young people themselves and to give them an opportunity to identify their needs.

### Aim and Purpose of Research

*The aim of the research is:*

- To learn the nature and extent of drug and alcohol use and misuse amongst second level school students aged 12-16 years, in Enniscorthy
- To learn what services and facilities are available and known to young people and to identify gaps
- To learn the recreational activities and needs of young people

*The purpose of the research is:*

- To hear and present the views of young people
- To provide information, from young people themselves, which will inform the action plan of the Enniscorthy CBDI
- To have information for use when making funding applications and to lobby on behalf of young people in Enniscorthy

### Setting the Context

This section provides some general background information relating to issues examined in this research. Reference is made to reports and studies in Europe, Ireland and Wexford in order to place this research in context.

### Main Findings

Figures were taken from 489 questionnaires. 46% of respondents were males, 54% were females, 48% living in an urban area, 49% living in a rural area 3% did not specify. All respondents were aged 16 years and under and attending second level schools in the Enniscorthy area.

#### Part One:

The nature and extent of alcohol and illegal drug use among young people, 12-16 years in the Enniscorthy area

- 82% of males and 83% of females have drunk alcohol.
- 25.8% of respondents report that they drink regularly, with 13.3% drinking weekly and a further 11.5% drinking monthly.

- 56% of respondents stated that they drink alcohol on special occasions such as family occasions. Special occasions may include birthdays, after exams, and during school term time, weekends.
- Of those who first drank alcohol at 12 years and under, a number have drunk only once and a further number have drunk with their parents at family celebrations and special events. This contributed to the high figure of those who first drank alcohol at 12 years and under.
- The optimum age of first use of alcohol is 13 years.
- The main source of alcohol, according to the survey, is the home or from friends and a significant number also obtain alcohol from off-licenses, pubs and clubs.
- Young people drink alcohol at home or in a friend's house, but do not indicate whether this is with consent or knowledge of parents.
- Young people drink alcohol at discos, clubs and pubs, below the legal age for buying alcohol.
- Young people drink alcohol in out of sight and out of the way places and additional risks are attached to this.
- 16% of respondents have taken illegal drugs.
- Cannabis is the most commonly used illegal drug by those who have used drugs.
- The most common age of first use of illegal drugs by those who have used them is 13-14 years.
- Over 50% of those who have used illegal drugs, obtain them from friends or people they know.
- 21% of respondents who use drugs, do so weekly, a further 12.5% monthly and 38% occasionally.
- 61% of those who drink alcohol weekly, also use illegal drugs weekly.

## Executive Summary

### Part Two:

#### Supports and Services for Young People

- 34% of young people would seek support from parents if they or a friend had a problem with alcohol or illegal drugs. Nearly 11% would seek support from other family members and almost 13% would talk to friends.
- Nearly 14% of young people would seek help from school counsellors or teachers but some were unaware of staff in their school with that role.
- Young people need an assurance of confidentiality when seeking support.
- 45% of young people who would not seek help with a problem, would be embarrassed or afraid. They also feared their parents finding out.
- Many young people are unaware of supports and services available in Enniscorthy.

### Part Three:

#### Recreational Activities and Needs of Young people

- 44% of respondents spend their free time at home or in a friend's house. 25% of respondents drink alcohol at home or in a friend's house.
- Over a third of young people spend free time in the street or hanging out in town or village.
- Young people seek access to existing facilities such as school sports grounds, GAA pitches and local facilities, particularly in the evenings and at weekends.
- Young people need affordable and accessible recreational options.

- Young women seek better access to sports facilities and to a greater variety of facilities and activities.
- Young people seek access to youth clubs, projects, community centres and other recreational options in the evenings and at weekends.

#### Main Recommendations

- Raise awareness with young people and their peers regarding:
  - Prevention
  - Crisis Intervention
  - Safer behaviour
  - On-going support
- Raise awareness among parents/guardians concerning issues of parental responsibility.
- Publicise and promote existing supports/services to young people and their families, community groups, schools and all those working with young people.
- A Juvenile Liason Officer (JLO) and a gardai Juvenile Diversion Scheme to be based in Enniscorthy.
- Our research indicates that young people would welcome an adolescence counselling service on a drop-in basis.
- A help line number and service should be more widely publicised in locations used by young people. Help line support provided on a 24-hour basis, or at least at times when young people are most likely to seek support or advice, i.e. weekends and evenings.

- That voluntary and community groups should support young people and communities to establish local youth clubs. Young people should be involved in the planning and design of youth clubs, activities and programmes. Research the feasibility of providing access to youth clubs/facilities at weekends.
- Examine, with relevant bodies, the feasibility of making existing facilities more accessible to young people and into the possibility of providing local supervision.
- The views of young people should be taken on board in any review of policy, by statutory or voluntary agencies, concerning protocol with young people seeking support/counselling.



## Introduction

The Enniscorthy Community Based Drugs Initiative began this research in April 2003. Their aim was gather information from young people in the Enniscorthy area about the nature and extent of alcohol and illegal drug use among young people and also to learn, support and recreational needs from young people themselves.

The purpose of the research was to develop an action plan for the C.B.D.I. based on the experience and needs of young people, as articulated by them. The information obtained will enable the C.B.D.I. to direct their work and provide a resource when working with young people and adults in the Enniscorthy area. It will also provide a tool for lobbying on behalf of young people and their families.

The C.B.D.I. decided to distribute questionnaires to young people in second level schools in Enniscorthy, in order to reach as many young people as possible. In addition, C.B.D.I. members carried out three focus group discussions, to give young people an opportunity to discuss issues in greater depth and to clarify responses. These were held in both urban and rural locations with males and females from each age group.

It is hoped this research will provide useful information to communities in Enniscorthy and encourage constructive discussion and action on the issues raised.

## Setting the Context

### Population in Ireland

In 2002 the population of Ireland was 3,917,336, an increase of 12.9% since 1996. There were 283,600 young people between 10-14 years and 318,400 between 15-19 years, comprising over 15.3% of the population.

There are 144,200 (10-14 years) males and 163,500 (15-19 years) and 139,300 (10-14 years) and 154,900 (15-19 years) females (Census 2002 Preliminary Report).

### Overall Picture in County Wexford

Wexford is a mainly rural county, with approximately 60% of the population living outside the four main towns of Wexford, Enniscorthy, New Ross and Gorey. The Bacon Report (2001) identified low levels of disposable income, isolation, social exclusion and some rural poverty as some of the main challenges for the county. Disposable income levels in County Wexford are among the lowest in the country. There is evidence of high levels of deprivation and exclusion when measured in terms of educational attainment, unemployment experience home and car ownership. Early school leaving in the county is among the highest in Ireland. 11.8% of those aged 15 and over left school with primary education or without second level certification. 13.1% had a third level qualification, compared with the National figure of 19%. (Bacon 2001)

### Population in County Wexford

The population of County Wexford is 116,543, which is an increase of 12,172 (11.7%) since 1996. The overall male/female population of County Wexford is 58,225 male and 58,318 female. The age

breakdown is 9,183 aged 10-14 years and 9,155 aged 15-19 years, comprising 15.7% of the population of the county and slightly higher than the national percentage figure. (Census 2002 Preliminary Report)

In County Wexford young people 0-14 years represented 24.7% of the population (13,224 males and 12,660 females) and those aged 15-19 years represented 9.4% (5030 males and 4814 females) (Census 1996).

### Overall Picture in Enniscorthy

Enniscorthy is a rural town, one of four main towns in the county. It is situated on, and divided by, the River Slaney. It is the most centrally placed of the four main towns in the county.

The Hasse index of deprivation (which measures deprivation by unemployment rate, medical card holders, levels of overcrowding and car ownership) shows that Enniscorthy area was measured at 9/10 in 1996, which placed it amongst the poorest areas in the country (Bacon 2001).

### Population in Enniscorthy

The population of Enniscorthy urban, which includes the town and surrounding rural areas, is 3742. This is a decrease since 1996 of 46 (1.2%). However, the population of Enniscorthy rural area as a whole is 29,124, which is an increase of 11.3% since 1996.

In urban Enniscorthy, there are 1,829 males and a slightly higher female population of 1,913. In Enniscorthy rural area, there are 14,744 males and 14,380 females (Census 2002 Preliminary Report).

At time of writing, only a preliminary report on the

2002 Census was available, so for further information, it has been necessary to refer to figures shown in the 1996 Census.

This showed that although there were more females in general in urban areas, males under 15 years made up 51.1% of those under 15 years in urban areas and 51.4% of the population in rural areas

### Alcohol use in Ireland

There has been a steady increase in alcohol consumption since the late 1980's. The rate of consumption by those aged 15 years and over has risen from 9.03 litres of pure alcohol per person in 1990 to 12.40 per person in 1996. A national survey carried out in 1993 relating to young people showed that by the age of 16 years, 79% of males and 76% of females have drunk alcohol. It also showed that of young people aged between 12-13 years, 8% were regular consumers and 8% were occasional consumers. By the age of 16 years, 41% were regular consumers and 16% were occasional consumers.

(Source: [www.eurocare.org/profiles/irelandeupolicy2003](http://www.eurocare.org/profiles/irelandeupolicy2003))

In 1999, an ESPAD study found that Ireland and Denmark were the highest consumers of beer per capita, and consumption had increased since a 1995 ESPAD study. Binge drinking (i.e. 5 or more drinks in a row) had also increased. In relation to consumption of spirits, girls in Ireland and the U.K. drank more frequently and in larger quantities than boys. (ESPAD 1999). The School survey project on Alcohol and Other Drugs (ESPAD 1999) targeted young people who were 15-16 years at the time of data collection. It examined levels of alcohol consumption among this age group. 40% of students in Ireland reported

## Setting the Context

they had drunk alcohol on 40 or more occasions. 16% had drunk alcohol more than 10 times in the last month. 35% reported they had drunk beer 3 times or more and 34% had drunk spirits more than 3 times in the previous month. 25% stated they had been drunk 20 times or more in their lifetime and 24% had been drunk more than 3 times in the previous month. 31% reported binge drinking three or more times in the previous month.

A recent Youth Poll was carried out between August-September by The Irish Times/TNS mrobi among a sample group of 1000 young people throughout Ireland aged between 15-24 years. It found that 80% of young people drink alcohol. The average age at which they started to drink alcohol was 15 years and 84% started drinking before the legal age for being served alcohol in a pub or off-licence. The poll showed that the average amount of alcoholic drinks consumed on a good night out is eight, and this applied to 15-17 year olds as much as to the older age group. 26% of those below 18 years drink alcohol at home with the consent of their parents and 67% are not allowed to drink at home. The poll found that 23% started drinking at 16 years, 19% started drinking at 15 years, 12% at 14 years, 6% at 13 years and 5% at 12 years or under. (The Irish Times 18th September 2003)

### **Levels and Patterns of Illegal Drug Use in Europe and Ireland**

Cannabis use in Europe is concentrated in 15-24 year age group. In 1998, 22% of 18-24 year olds declared they had used cannabis within the previous year. Ireland and the U.K. have the highest levels of cannabis use (EMCDDA in Morgan 2001). In Ireland, figures show that one third of young people between 16-25 years tried cannabis (Bryan *et al.*, 2000; Hibell

*et al.*, 2001 cited in Morgan 2001).

The use of illegal substances is concentrated among young adults, particularly males, in urban areas although it may be spreading to smaller towns and rural areas. Cannabis use increased during the 1990s in most EU countries, and although it appears to have levelled off in some countries, there has been an increase in Ireland. (*Annual Report EMCDDA2002*).

It was found in Ireland that 37% of 16 year olds had used cannabis, 16% used other illegal drugs and 7% used tranquillisers (ESPAD 1995).

A 1999 ESPAD study found that levels of illegal drug use increased in almost all participating countries. Ireland shows a decrease in levels of cannabis use. The Czech Republic and the UK show the highest levels of use, 'closely followed' by Ireland. (ESPAD 1999)

In the 1999 School survey project on Alcohol and Other Drugs with young people aged 15-16 years, 32% of students surveyed in Ireland reported using cannabis, with notable gender differences. 35% of males and 29% of females reported lifetime cannabis use. 15% of those surveyed in Ireland reported use of cannabis in the previous 30 days. Use of other substances was lower, with 3% using amphetamines, 5% using LSD and 5% using Ecstasy. Ireland was among the countries where the highest levels of LSD and Ecstasy use were found. Reported use of inhalants was highest in Ireland at 22%. (ESPAD 1999)

The Youth Poll carried out in August-September 2003 by The Irish Times/TNS mrobi found that 39% in the age group 15-24 years have tried illegal drugs and 14% use them regularly, i.e. at least once a fortnight. Almost all of these use cannabis. Overall, 39% of those surveyed have tried cannabis, with 27% of 15-17 year olds having tried cannabis. The poll also found that 10% of 15-17 year olds use cannabis regularly and that of those, a significantly higher percentage of regular users are male, (15%) with 6% of females using cannabis regularly.

In relation to obtaining cannabis, 77% of all respondents stated it was easy to obtain. The use of other drugs is lower with 12% having tried ecstasy and 3% using it regularly. 10% have tried speed (amphetamine) and 1% use it regularly. 9% have tried cocaine and 1% use it regularly. These drugs are not so easy to obtain, according to respondents. 59% stated that ecstasy is easily obtainable, 37% saying cocaine is easy to get and 36% saying that speed is easily obtainable. (Irish Times 18th September 2003)

It is worth noting, in view of the levels of alcohol consumption, that a relationship between drinking and using illegal drugs has been recorded. ([www.samhsa.gov/oas](http://www.samhsa.gov/oas))

This is also evidenced by treatment and counselling services (see figures below in Cornmarket Project Annual Report 2002)

## Setting the Context

### Drug Use in County Wexford

A C.B.D.I. school survey carried out in three schools in the county in 1999 among 1447 13-18 year olds showed the following use:

Drugs of choice	% of young people
Cigarettes	59%
Alcohol	86%
Cannabis	32%
Solvents	31%
Magic mushrooms	10%
Amphetamines	9%
Ecstasy	7%
LSD	4%

*Note: This shows a high level of solvent use, which has not been reflected in other surveys although 22% reported use of inhalants in the ESPAD study amongst 15-16 year olds in 1999*

A survey carried out by the CDBI in the Gorey area in 2000 –2001, with 82 young people of 12 – 18 years, found that 33% had used drugs and 67% stated they had not. However, of that 67%, 26% have used cigarettes or alcohol or both (Casey 2001)

### Treatment Services in South East Region and County Wexford

Not all people who use drugs go on to have problem drug use. Estimates of problem drug use in Europe are in general between 2-5 cases per 1000 of the population between 15-64 years. (EMCDDA 2002) Health board figures show that in the south-east

region of Ireland, 76% of those attending for treatment of problem drug use were male and 24% female.

Young people in the 10-19 year age group from County Wexford constituted 8% of those attending for treatment, with 29%, the largest group, aged 20-29 years.

With regard to educational levels reached by those in treatment, just below 70% had reached second level education, and approximately 20% reached primary level education, while close to 5% were still in education (Kidd 2001).

In the south-east region overall, the main drug for which treatment is sought is alcohol, accounting for 77% of all cases in 2001. There was a 5% increase in those seeking treatment for alcohol use since the previous year.

Treatment for cannabis use accounted for 13% of cases. The numbers seeking treatment for cannabis use showed a decrease of 4% from figures in 2000. Treatment for ecstasy use also showed a decrease from the previous year, from 5% in 2000 to 3% in 2001.

Those attending for treatment of heroin, cocaine and hallucinogens all showed a slight increase as did those presenting with problematic use of inhalants. The main drugs for which treatment was sought in the South-East Health Board Region during 2001 were alcohol, cannabis, ecstasy and heroin. (Kidd 2001)

In County Wexford, the figures of those attending services for treatment in 2001 are:

Drugs of choice	% of young people
Alcohol	75%
Cannabis	16%
Ecstasy	4%
Amphetamines	2%
Heroin	2%
Cocaine	1%

With regard to Probation and Welfare Services, the percentage of cases which involve drugs / alcohol in Wexford is 65%. It is likely that these figures are an underestimation of cases involving drugs/alcohol. (Kidd 2001).

The Cornmarket Project in Wexford town supported 154 people through its counselling/intervention service in October-December 2002, an increase from figures in the same period in 2001 when 61 people used the service. The increase is due primarily to expansion of the service.

The largest group seen by the project were in the 16-22 year age group (46%) and 74% of those were male.

The project report states that most clients presenting to the service were poly drug users. The main drugs used were alcohol and cannabis and where this combination of drugs was used, they found that use started at an early age, sometimes at 12 years. The project reported a slight increase in people presenting with heroin and/or cocaine use, and a change in the pattern of speed and ecstasy use, to more regular use outside of the dance scene. (*Annual Report 2002*)

## Setting the Context

Reason for using service	No. of people
Alcohol	85
Cannabis	73
Ecstasy	62
Speed/LSD	49
Opiates	12
Family Support	30
Other	9

### Supports and Services in Enniscorthy

There are a number of supports and services available in Enniscorthy, some of which are outlined below.

The Community Based Drugs Initiative delivers training and support to young people and families around issues and concerns about drug use. They also service an information point in each of the schools.

There are two community counsellors in County Wexford, who are based in the health centre in Enniscorthy two days a week, Tuesday and Friday.

The Cornmarket Project, based in Wexford, offers a counselling service and training supports to people from the county.

There is help line service based in Waterford. 1004 people contacted the Regional Drugs Help line in 2001 and 119 were from County Wexford. There was an overall decrease of callers (245) in the region in 2000, but a slight increase from callers in Wexford (3). According to the director of the help line, the majority of calls come from concerned parents and the information sought is about referrals, legal and general queries.

There is an information point in the Enniscorthy Community Youth Project, where young people and adults can seek information.

There is also a Citizens Advice Centre and the Enniscorthy Peoples Resource Centre. The Young Women's Educational and Development Project support young women and young mothers and is based in Enniscorthy Community Youth project.

For young people seeking support around family separation there is a Teen Between service available and a free counselling service is also available.

Templeshannon Community Development Project support and host groups and counselling services for young people and families around a range of issues, including addiction and mental health, and have links with the South Eastern Health Board and Bernardos.

Note: The current situation with regard to young people and confidentiality is that counsellors, both working privately and those employed by the South Eastern Health Board are obliged to seek consent from parents and guardians before offering counselling service to young people. They would put a contract in place with parents around confidentiality and best practice would be to work with both parents and young people. There are certain disclosures which counsellors are obliged to report, e.g. abuse or suicide.

### Young People in Society

*'If you are excluded it means your opinion is not sought and it doesn't count. In fact you are not expected to have an opinion, rather you are encouraged to trust the opinion of the shapers of society'* (Powell and Guerin 1997 p.56)

In 1984, research showed that only 1% of young people belonged to a political group (Costello 1984) and 10 years later, an NYCI survey showed a lack of knowledge about local and national politics (NYCI 1996). They can feel powerless and irrelevant except as receivers of protective measures to counter perceived problems (O'Leary 2001 in McElwee et al., 2002). Adults hold power and apply labels to 'youth'. They may be perceived as delinquent, drug misusers and sexually promiscuous. This negative stereotyping impacts on their identity in society, on their roles, relationships and cultural activities. (McElwee et al., 2002)

When young people receive media attention it is often as 'problem youth'. Their response can be to move to an alternative culture, which interacts on the streets and holds different values.

### Problem Use and Risk factors

There are a number of theories as to why young people use drugs and why, for some, drug use becomes problematic. They include risk factors, psychological factors, biological theory and social attachment theory, which identify weak bonds with institutions and society. Other theories state that drug use is more common amongst young people who are non-conforming, alienated, rebellious (Shedler and Block 1990 in Morgan 2001) detached from family, school and religion (Grube and Morgan 1986 in Morgan 2001) and those involved with deviant peers (Elliot et al 1985). Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura 1997 in Morgan 2001) suggests that young people acquire their beliefs from role models, particularly friends and parents who use drugs.

## Setting the Context

Cultural factors play a part in substance use and Morgan (2001) cites the example of drinking patterns in southern wine drinking countries and the levels of drunkenness in northern beer drinking countries.

Most research draws a distinction between experimental and recreational use and problematic use. Estimates of problem use in Europe are 2-5 cases per 1000 of the population aged between 15-64 years (EMCDDA 2002). As outlined briefly above, there are a number of theories as to why use becomes problematic for some and not for others. It is argued by Bell and Bell that risk taking is a necessary aspect of adolescent behaviour as part of the process of developing one's own identity and making decisions.

Bell and Bell (1993) identify three types of risk taking behaviour:

1. Developmentally enhancing e.g. rock-climbing
2. Dangerous e.g. joy riding, unprotected sex, drug taking
3. Life threatening e.g. fighting with knives or guns

It is asserted that if young people have the opportunity to indulge in risk taking behaviour that is developmental, they may be diverted from participating in more dangerous forms of risk taking behaviour.

### **Approaches and Strategies for Prevention**

Experimental or recreational drug use is not uncommon amongst young people from all social backgrounds. Educational prevention approaches emphasise personal and social development and the development of social skills and decision-making skills.

Schools programmes, such as Social and Personal Health Education, which actively involve young people, are in place in many second level schools and become compulsory from September 2003. Morgan (2001) recommended community strategies, which involve innovative strategies to reach young people who have left school and that drug prevention take place in community settings such as youth clubs, community centres, sports centres and workplaces. Further, he highlights the need for broadly based programmes and anti-poverty strategies to address drug prevention as part of health inequality programmes and attempt to address issues of social exclusion, which can contribute to problematic drug use.

In addition, opportunities for alternative options are promoted as means of involving young people in activities. The Young Peoples Facilities and Services Fund (YPFSF) was established by the Government in 1998 to assist in the development of targeted preventative strategies through the development of youth facilities, including sport and recreational facilities, and services in disadvantaged areas where a significant drug problem exists or has the potential to develop. The aim of the government through the Young People Services and Facilities Fund is to fund projects and facilities which engage young people in sport and recreation to divert them from drugs and unhealthy lifestyle choices. (Morgan, 2001) Funding from YPFSF to date has been concentrated in areas with high levels of problematic drug use and in RAPID areas.

### **Activities and Facilities**

It is recognised that participation in sports can have many benefits for young people, both in terms of physical fitness and in terms of learning team skills and social skills. Participation in sports can contribute to enriching lives and broadening experiences of young people if they can attain a level of expertise. Mainstream sports, particularly those involving males, receive much greater sponsorship and grant aid than female equivalents, and with some exceptions, media coverage favours male sports and personalities (McElwee et al., 2002)

However, for those wishing to participate in sports or activities other than mainstream sports, there are few facilities and resources. Further, the cost of participation in sports such as swimming, tennis and golf and other activities such as dance, drama and music may make them inaccessible to many young people even if there are facilities within their own areas. In addition to cost, young people in rural locations may not have access because of lack of transport. Lack of adequate rural transport contributes to isolation and exclusion and may limit the ability of young people to access services and facilities. The provision of a rural transport system to improve access to services and facilities, including recreational facilities was recommended by the Bacon Report (2001).

## Setting the Context

### Main Points

- Wexford is a mainly rural county with four main urban centres. Enniscorthy, Wexford, New Ross and Gorey. The population of Enniscorthy, town and rural areas, is 29,124 and has increased since 1996, although the population living in the town has decreased slightly. Young people, aged between 10-19 years, comprise 15.7% of the population of the county
- In County Wexford, disposable income levels are among the lowest in the country and in Enniscorthy levels of disadvantage, as measured by the Hasse index (1996), are very high
- The need to provide a rural transport system to improve access to services and facilities for the rural population, including recreational facilities, has been highlighted.
- It is not possible to make direct comparisons between surveys examining alcohol use because of differences in the age groups of young people surveyed. The recent poll by The Irish Times/TNS mrbi found that 80% of young people aged 15-24 years have drunk alcohol. 84% of those started drinking before 18 years and average age that young people started drinking alcohol is 15 \_ years. 67% were not allowed by parents to drink at home and 26% drink at home with the consent of parents. The 1999 C.B.D.I. schools survey found that 86% of respondents have drunk alcohol.

The ESPAD study (1999) found that 31% of 15-16 year olds surveyed, reported binge drinking at least 3 times in the previous month.

- Although it is not possible to make direct comparisons between surveys in Ireland or Wexford, because of differences in age groups surveyed, surveys show similar results regarding illegal drug use. Cannabis is the most commonly used and easily obtainable illegal drug. Surveys found between 27% and 33% of young people 12-18 years have used cannabis. The recent Irish Times survey found that 10% of 15-17 year olds use cannabis regularly.
- The majority of young people will not go on to experience problematic drug/alcohol use, it is estimated to be 2-5 per 1000 cases, but the risk is greater when other factors of disadvantage apply. Drugs/alcohol are involved in 65% of cases which are referred to the Probation and Welfare services
- Risk taking and testing boundaries is part of adolescent behaviour and can be channelled into developmental activity rather than dangerous behaviour
- Strategies for prevention and education include the S.P.H.E. programme in schools and community responses such as the C.B.D.I. and Youth and Community projects in Enniscorthy have an important role to play. Support is needed for community responses to reach out to young people who are not in the schools system as well as those who are in education.
- Resources are needed for the development of sporting and other recreational facilities and options, which meet the needs of young people, male and female. Provision of alternative options is recognised as a strategy for diverting young people from dangerous risk taking behaviour into developmental behaviour.

## Method

There were two methods used to obtain information for this research, quantitative (questionnaires) and qualitative (focus group discussions).

Questionnaires were devised by Enniscorthy C.B.D.I., tested with a sample group of young people and recommended changes made.

Questionnaires were distributed to young people, male and female, aged between 12 and 16 years from both urban and rural locations. The participants were given assurances of confidentiality and asked to give full and honest responses. The questionnaire comprises 10 questions, some containing a number of sub questions, relating to extent and patterns of alcohol and drug use and needs of young people in relation to services and facilities.

Completing the questionnaires provided an opportunity for young people to record their experiences relating to alcohol and drug use and to identify their support and recreational needs. 502 questionnaires were distributed, of which 12 were spoiled and 1 was not completed. The findings are a record of the responses of 489 young people.

*See appendix for sample questionnaire.*

In addition, focus groups discussions were carried out in small groups. They were held out in urban and rural locations with young people from the group who had completed the questionnaire. The focus groups comprised 16 young people, male and female, aged between 12 and 16 years and from urban and rural locations. The aim of the focus groups was to clarify some of the responses in the questionnaire and to expand on issues raised.

### **Limitations of Methods**

Questionnaires afford the best method of gathering information from a large number of people relatively quickly, and also afford anonymity. However, by its nature, a questionnaire limits scope in responses. Also, responses cannot be verified.

It was decided to distribute questionnaires to young people in mainstream second level education, but recognise that there are many young people outside of this system.

The number of those involved in focus groups, although representative, was limited due to time constraints.



## Presentation of Findings

### The aim of the research is:

- To learn the nature and extent of drug and alcohol use and misuse amongst second level school students aged 12-16 years, in Enniscorthy
- To learn what services and facilities are available and known to young people and to identify gaps
- To learn the recreational activities and needs of young people

### The purpose of the research is:

- To hear and present the views of young people
- To provide information from young people themselves which will inform the action plan of the Enniscorthy CBDI
- To have information for use when making funding applications and to lobby on behalf of young people in Enniscorthy

Research was carried out with young people, both male and female, in mainstream education and aged between 12 years and 16 years. Questionnaires were distributed through schools and focus groups were carried out at a later date.

Three focus groups were held with young people from 12 years to 16 years, male and female living in both rural and urban areas

### The Participants

502 Questionnaires were distributed. Of these, one was not completed and 12 were spoiled. The findings are based on the responses given in 489 questionnaires.

### 1. Male/Female

225 (46%) males and 264 (54%) females participated.

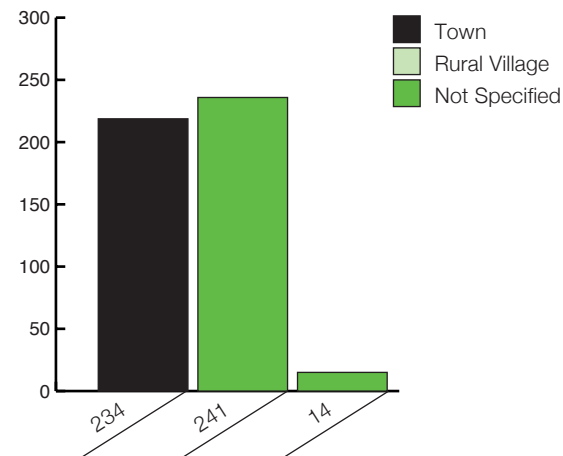
### 2. Age

**Table 1 :** Age and Gender of respondents

Age	No. of participants	Males	Females
12 years	18	5	13
13 years	112	35	77
14 years	177	81	96
15 years	150	82	68
16 years	32	22	10
<b>Total</b>	<b>489</b>	<b>225</b>	<b>264</b>

### 3. Do you live in, or within walking distance of Enniscorthy Town or in a village?

**Table 2 :** Chart showing place of residence

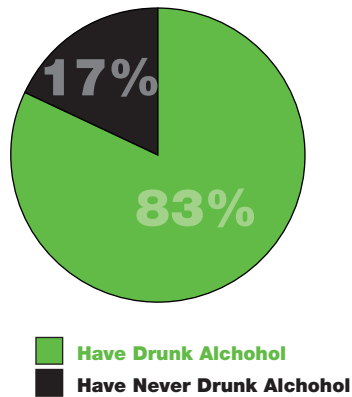


## Part One : The Nature and Extent of alcohol and drug use among respondents

### 4. Have you ever drunk alcohol?

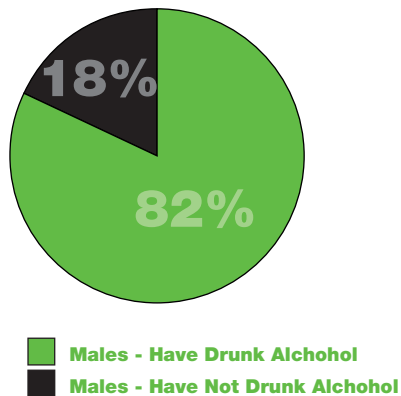
406 (83%) of respondents have drunk alcohol and 83 (17%) have not.

**Table 3 (a)** : Chart showing the percentage of those who have drunk alcohol

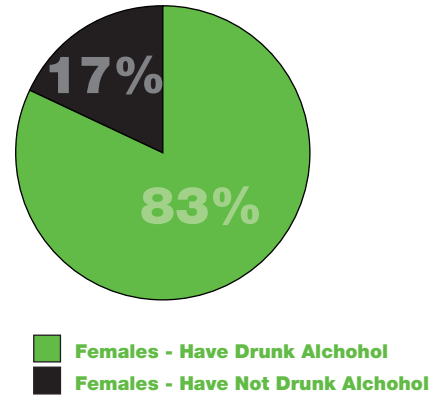


### Breakdown by Gender

**Table 3 (b)** : Percentage of male respondents who have drunk alcohol



**Table 3 (c)** : Percentage of female respondents who have drunk alcohol



The charts show that the percentage of males and females who have drunk alcohol is almost equal, with a slightly higher percentage of females having done so.

### 4.1 How often?

**Table 4 (a)** : Frequency of drinking alcohol

How Often	Number	%
Once	78	19.2
Special Occasions	226	56
Monthly	47	11.5
Weekly	54	13.3
No Reply	1	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>406</b>	<b>100</b>

There are a number of young people who stated they have drunk only once and a further number who stated they drank on special family occasions with their parents.

Of those who started to drink at 12 years or under, 15 stated that they had drunk alcohol once and 32 stated that they drank on special occasions in the company of their parents and responses were consistent with drinking on occasions such as Christmas, christenings and weddings. Others stated that they drank at home but did not indicate if it was with the consent and knowledge of their parents.

### Focus Group

In the focus groups, clarification was sought about what young people meant by special occasions. All saw weddings, christenings, Christmas and 21st parties and 'after exams' as special occasions. In addition birthdays were seen as special occasions and during term time, weekends might also be seen as special occasions.

Drinking is generally done when young people go out and because they do not go out every night, they stated that weekends would probably be classed as special occasions. Alcohol is certainly seen by many respondents as a part of celebrations or as part of relaxation time.

## Part One : The Nature and Extent of alcohol and drug use among respondents

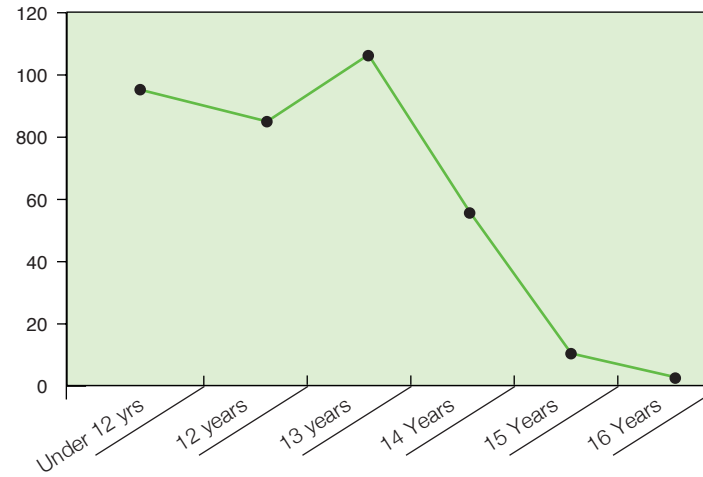
### 4.2 What age were you when you started to drink?

**Table 4 (b) :** Age of respondents when they first drank alcohol

Starting age	Number	% approx
Under 12 years	96	24
12 years	89	22
13 years	108	26.5
14 years	56	14
15 years	10	2
16 years	2	0.5
No Reply	45	11
<b>Total</b>	<b>406</b>	<b>100</b>

Of those who have drunk alcohol, this indicates that 73% of respondents have had their first drink of alcohol by the age of 13 years and over 86% have drunk alcohol by 14 years.

**Table 4 (c) :** Graph showing starting age



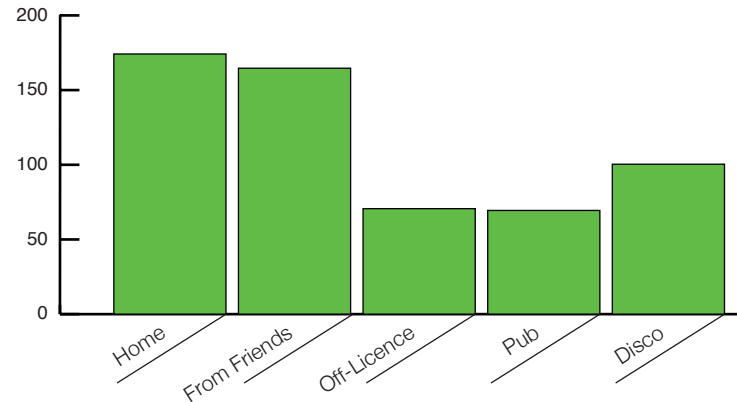
It is important to note that this cannot be taken as an indication that young people do not start to drink alcohol at 16 years, but rather that respondents of 16 years in this survey had already drunk alcohol before that age. Further, only 32 respondents were in the 16 year old age group, compared with larger numbers in younger age groups. (see age breakdown)

## Part One : The Nature and Extent of alcohol and drug use among respondents

### 4.3 Where do you generally obtain alcohol?

**Table 4 (d)** : Chart showing where respondents obtain alcohol

Note: More than one source may have been indicated

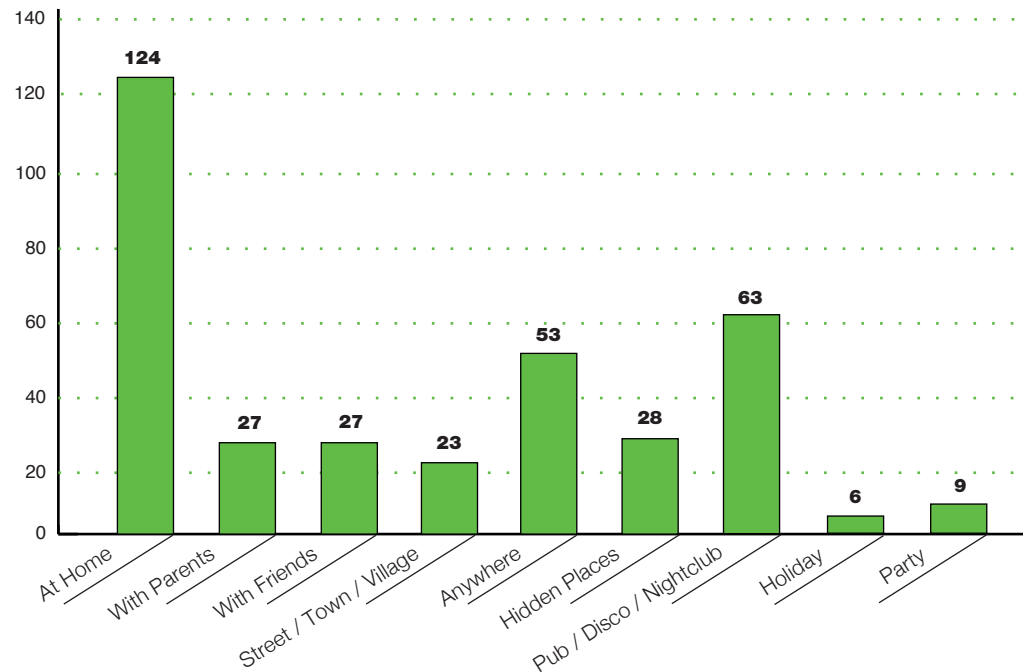


### 4.4 Where do you drink it?

This was an open question where options were not offered. 124 replied that they drank at home and additional 27 said they drank with their parents. 27 stated that they drank with friends but did not specify where and 53 stated that they drank anywhere, often where they would not be seen or caught. 26 said they drank in a pub, 6 at a nightclub, 31 at a disco, or on the way to the disco and 9 said they drank at parties. Other places where young people drink are on the street, 16, in the town or village 6. Others drink outdoors out of sight in places such as fields, 15, when away, 6, or other hidden locations 13.

**Table 4 (e)** : Chart showing where respondents drink alcohol and number who drink there.

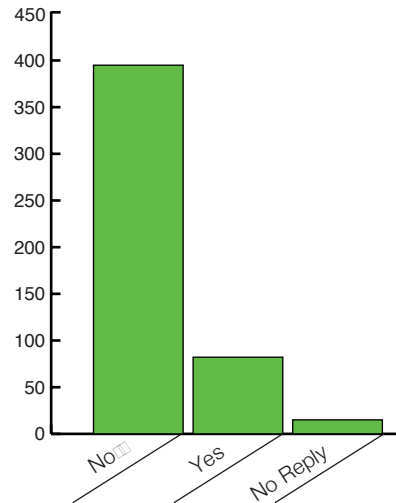
This shows a clear picture of where young people drink alcohol. 53 young people stated that they drank 'anywhere' indicating that they drink when the opportunity arises.



## Part One : The Nature and Extent of alcohol and drug use among respondents

### 5. Do you, or have you ever used drugs?

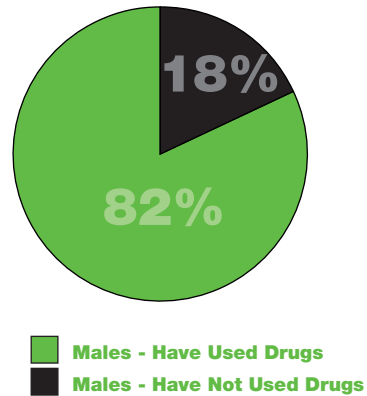
**Table 5 (a) :** Number of respondents who have taken illegal drugs



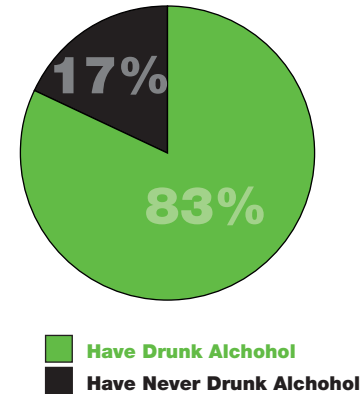
This shows that 391 (80%) of participants stated they have not used illegal drugs and 79 (16%) have taken drugs. 19 (4%) did not reply to the question. It was not specified in the questionnaire whether it was illegal drugs that were referred to, but responses clearly show that respondents meant illegal when completing the questionnaire and in focus groups.

### Breakdown by Gender

**Table 5 (b) :** Chart showing percentage of male respondents who have used drugs



**Table 5 (c) :** Chart showing percentage of female respondents who have used drugs



Charts show a significant difference in levels of drug use between males and females, whereas the percentage of males and females who drink alcohol is much closer, with a slightly higher percentage of females who have drunk alcohol.

### 5.1 If yes, what drugs have you used?

Of 79 respondents who stated they had used drugs, 65 said they used cannabis/hash. This constitutes 82% of that group and 13.2% of the total number of people involved in the questionnaire. Ecstasy was the next most commonly used drug, with 18 young people stating they had used it. This represents nearly 23% of that group and almost 4% of the overall number of respondents. There is also some poly drug use, with 26 respondents (35.6%) stating they had used more than one drug.

## Part One : The Nature and Extent of alcohol and drug use among respondents

### Focus Groups

The focus groups were asked what their perceptions of non-drinkers were. Responses varied, from being seen as cool, rich, intelligent, sensible and belonging to a higher class to 'different, freaks and wasters'. Non-drinkers were also seen as fit and people who 'looked after their bodies'. It was seen as cool to be able to have a good time without drinking, but generally it was felt that most young people 'have to have a drink to have fun'. It was felt it was normal and 'what is wrong with young people having a drink?' Others felt it was acceptable to have sips, but that more was 'mad' or wrong. Those who had family members experiencing problems with alcohol said it was wrong to drink more than a very moderate amount.

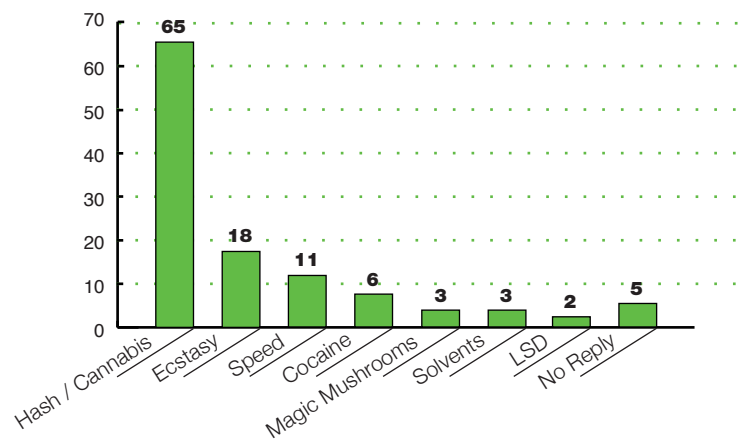
Asked how they felt about young people who drink, some replied that they felt they were unhappy and damaging themselves, particularly binge drinkers, and they identified the risk of becoming addicted and spending all their money on alcohol. It was felt that two or three drinks was acceptable but any more was not. Others responded that it was up to young people themselves and it would not concern them.

As respondents were aged 16 years and under and still in full time education, they were asked how they obtained money to buy drink. They said that some had part-time/babysitting jobs but that most got spending money from parents, through an allowance and payment for work around the house, or by taking it from parents.

**Table 5 (d) :** Showing what drugs have been used

Drug Used	No. of young people	% of those who use drugs	% of overall respondents
Hash / Cannabis	65	82	13.2
Ecstasy	18	23	4
Speed	11	14	2.2
Cocaine	6	7.6	1.2
Magic Mushrooms	3	3.8	0.6
Solvents	3	3.8	0.6
LSD	2	2.5	0.4
Cigarettes	7	9	1.4
No Reply	5	3.8	0.6

**Table 5 (e) :** Chart showing drugs used and numbers of respondents who have used them

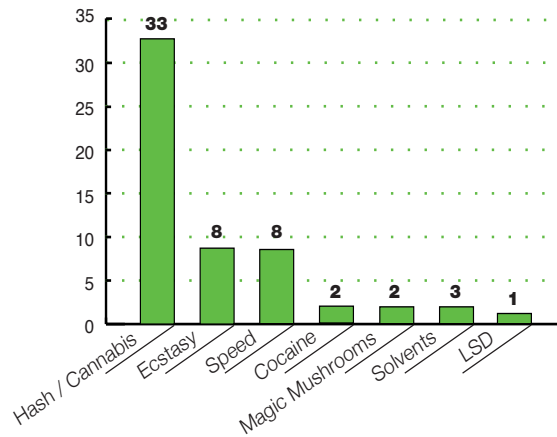


## Part One : The Nature and Extent of alcohol and drug use among respondents

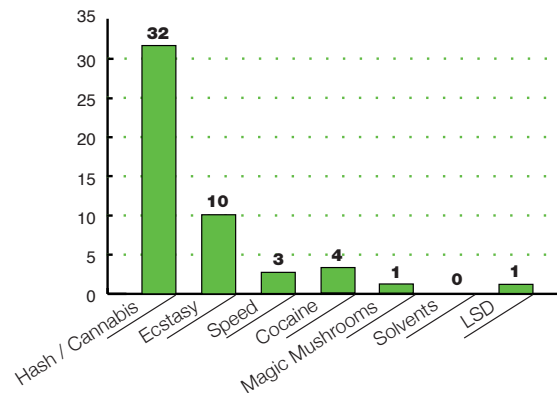
Of 79 young people who stated they had used drugs, 38 (48%) are female and 41(52%) are male. 14.39% of females and 18.32% of males have used illegal drugs by the age of 16 years.

### Breakdown by gender of drugs used

**Table 5 (f) : Drugs used by male respondents**



**Table 5 (g) : Drugs used by female respondents**



Cannabis is the most widely used illegal drug amongst both males and females. There is a higher use of speed amongst males and a higher use of cocaine amongst females. None of the female respondents used solvents, compared with 3 boys who have used them.

### 5.2 What age were you when you first used drugs?

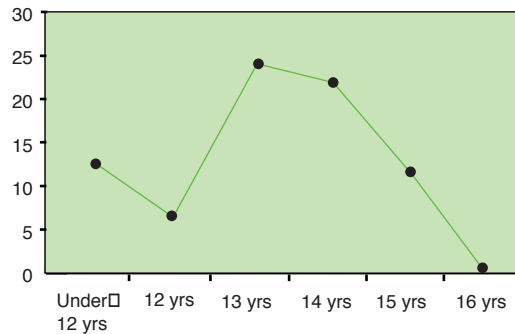
**Table 5 (h) : Age of first use**

Age of first use	No. of Respondents	% approx
Under 12 years	12	15
12 years	6	7.6
13 years	24	30.4
14 years	23	29
15 years	11	14
16 years	0	0
No reply	3	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>100</b>

**This shows that that 57 young people first tried illegal drugs between 13 and 14 years. This number represents over 72% of those who have used drugs and over 11.5% of the overall number of respondents.**

## Part One : The Nature and Extent of alcohol and drug use among respondents

**Table 5 (i) :** Graph showing age of first use



It is important to note that this cannot be taken as an indication that young people do not start to use drugs at 16 years, only that respondents aged 16 here had tried younger than 16 years. Further, the number of respondents in that age group was smaller than younger age groups. (see age breakdown)

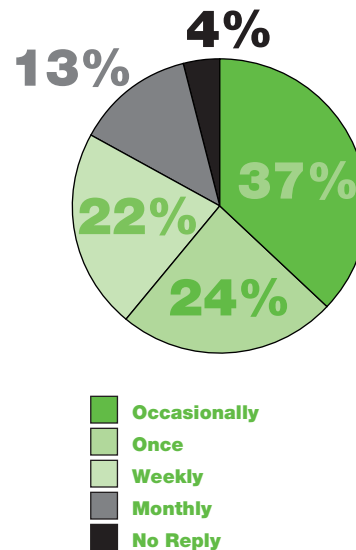
### 5.3 How often have you used drugs?

**Table 5 (j) :** Frequency of use amongst those who have used drugs

Frequency	Number	% approx
Once	19	24
Occasionally	30	38
Monthly	10	12.6
Weekly	17	21.5
No Reply	3	0.4

This indicates that the largest group take drugs when the opportunity arises, and over 21% take drugs on a weekly basis, indicating that it is part of their lifestyle.

**Table 5 (k) :** Chart showing the frequency of use



An important finding is that all but one of those who have used drugs, have also drunk alcohol. Of 54 respondents who drink alcohol on a weekly basis, 33 have also taken illegal drugs. 11 of these, aged between 13 and 16 years, stated they use alcohol and illegal drugs on a weekly basis.

This represents 2.86% of the total number of respondents and 13.9% of those who have used illegal drugs.

### 5.4 Where do you get them?

Young people who have used drugs gave the following as their sources:

**Table 5 (l) :** Where drugs are obtained

Where obtained	Number	% approx
From Friends	40	50.6
Contacts	9	11
Dealers	7	9
Anywhere	3	3.8
In Enniscorthy	3	3.8
Refused to say	6	7.6
Home	1	1
Shop	3	3.8
No Reply	9	11

Friends are the main source, with 40 (50.6%) indicating they obtained drugs from friends

Note: 'Shop' refers to purchase of cigarettes but cannot be taken as an indicator of levels of cigarette smoking amongst respondents



## Part One : The Nature and Extent of alcohol and drug use among respondents

### 5.5 Where do you take them?

**Table 5 (m) :** *Where respondents take drugs*

Where taken	% approx
Anywhere	22
Out of sight	11
Friends House	10
Discos / Nightclub	8
With Friends	7
At Home	5
Street	4
School	3
Hangout	2
Refused to say	2

22 (27%) of those who have used drugs state they use them anywhere, again indicating that frequently use occurs when the opportunity arises. A further 15 (19%) of respondents take drugs in a friend's house or at home.

#### Focus Groups

It was decided that the question in the survey relating to drug use should not specify any particular drug in order to gauge young peoples own perceptions.

#### What is a drug?

In the focus groups, the young people were asked what a drug is. They responded that 'a drug is something to get high' on and something to be cool.

A drug is a tablet, solvents, substances, used to spike drinks and addictive. Marijuana, hash, cocaine, ecstasy, weed were identified as drugs. Some identified alcohol and cigarettes as drugs, but others did not see alcohol as a drug.

In the questionnaire, only 7 young people identified themselves as cigarette smokers and cigarettes (tobacco) as a drug. In the focus groups, young people were asked if they saw cigarettes as a drug. They said that cigarette smokers would not class themselves as drug users and that it would not be seen as a drug, because everyone else is smoking. Although some would class cigarettes as a drug because of their addictive properties, people smoke cigarettes to be cool rather than to get high and consequently they are not considered as a 'drug'. When completing the questionnaire, cigarettes were not in general seen as a drug and the results do not reflect levels of cigarette smoking amongst the respondents. Some also said that cannabis is not really seen as a drug because so many people use it and inexpensive.

#### Image of drug users

The image of people who use drugs was that they do not work much or are not doing well if they are working, that they are wasting their lives, that they are pathetic and sad. They are 'rightly rejected by society' according to some in the focus groups. They are not making money, or they are making money by selling drugs to others. One group stated that people who use drugs are 'sad and in need of help'.

#### Why do young people use drugs?

The groups discussed why young people use drugs. They said 'some people use cannabis to help forget

their problems for a while' while realising that it does not make problems go away. Other reasons given were 'to be cool and to fit in' and they felt that peer pressure played a role. Others said that it was to get high, others because they are easy to get. 'Nothing to do' was another reason given. It was pointed out that the government make money from the sale of cigarettes through taxation.

#### Image of those who sell drugs

There are two images of those who sell drugs. The first is that of a person selling drugs to finance their own drug use and the second is that of a person who has material benefits from selling drugs such as nice clothes and a nice car.

They saw those who sell drugs as people who 'need the money' but it is the suppliers in Dublin who sell to them who are the 'bad people'.

#### Main Points

- Figures were taken from 489 questionnaires. 46% of respondents were males, 54% were females and all respondents were aged 16 years and under.
- Figures show a slightly higher percentage (1%) of young women have drunk alcohol and that a higher percentage (4%) of young males have taken illegal drugs
- 25.8% of respondents report that they drink regularly with 13.3% drinking weekly and a further 11.5% drinking monthly, indicating that drinking alcohol is a part of their social life and activities.

## Part One : The Nature and Extent of alcohol and drug use among respondents

This is supported by some comments from some of the focus groups, that many young people need to have a drink to have fun.

- 56% of respondents stated that they drink alcohol on special occasions, which includes weddings, christenings Christmas but question naire responses, supported by focus group discussions, indicate that special occasions may include birthdays, after exams, and during school term time, weekends. Drinking alcohol at family celebrations is moderate, 'sips', and done in the company of parents.
- Of those who first drank alcohol at 12 years and under, a number have drunk only once and a further number have drunk with their parents at family celebrations and special events, the millenium was given as an example. This contributed to the high figure of those who first drunk alcohol at 12 years and under.
- The graph shows the optimum age of first use of alcohol is 13 years.
- The main source of alcohol, according to the survey, is the home or from friends and a significant number also obtain alcohol from off-licenses, pubs and clubs.
- Many young people drink at home or in a friend's house (124) but do not indicate whether this is with consent or knowledge of parents. Again, a significant number (63) drink at discos, clubs and pubs. 106 young people drink on the street, in fields and in out of the way places with the additional risks that are attached to drinking in these locations.
- 16% of respondents have taken illegal drugs. The ESPAD (1995) survey of Irish students found that 37% of Irish students aged 16 years had used cannabis. The 1999 Schools Survey Project on Alcohol and other Drugs (ESPAD 1999) found that 32% of students in Ireland reported using cannabis, a decrease since 1995. There were notable gender differences with 35% of males and 29% of females reporting cannabis use. 3% of students in Ireland reported use of amphetamine (speed), 5% use LSD and 5% use ecstasy. Of 16 year olds in this survey, 34% have used cannabis, which is slightly above the national figure reported in the 1999 ESPAD survey. Cannabis is the most commonly used illegal drug by those who have used drugs. It was said in one focus group that some young people view use of cannabis as acceptable, because it is so commonly used and so inexpensive.
- The age of first use of illegal drugs is 13–14 years, which indicates, as with alcohol, that if diversion is to be used as a strategy, options must be offered to young people of that age.
- Over 50% obtain drugs from friends or people they know, indicating that it is part of their social scene.
- 21% of respondents who use drugs, do so weekly, a further 12.5% monthly and 38% occasionally.
- 33 of 54 respondents who drink alcohol weekly, also use illegal drugs weekly. This link has been found in other surveys and in figures showing drugs of choice by those seeking treatment in the Cornmarket Project.

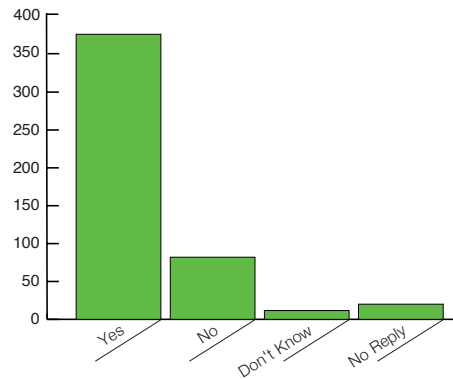
## Part Two: Supports and Services for Young People

The purpose of the questions in this section is to learn more about the knowledge and attitude of the respondents to supports and services which are available and to identify the gaps as seen by the young people themselves

### 6. If you or a Friend had a problem with drugs or alcohol, would you go for help?

The majority (378) replied that they would go for help, but a sizeable minority (90) stated that they would not. Two stated that they did not know and 19 did not reply to that question

**Table 6 (a)** : Chart showing number of respondents who would seek help for a problem with drugs/alcohol

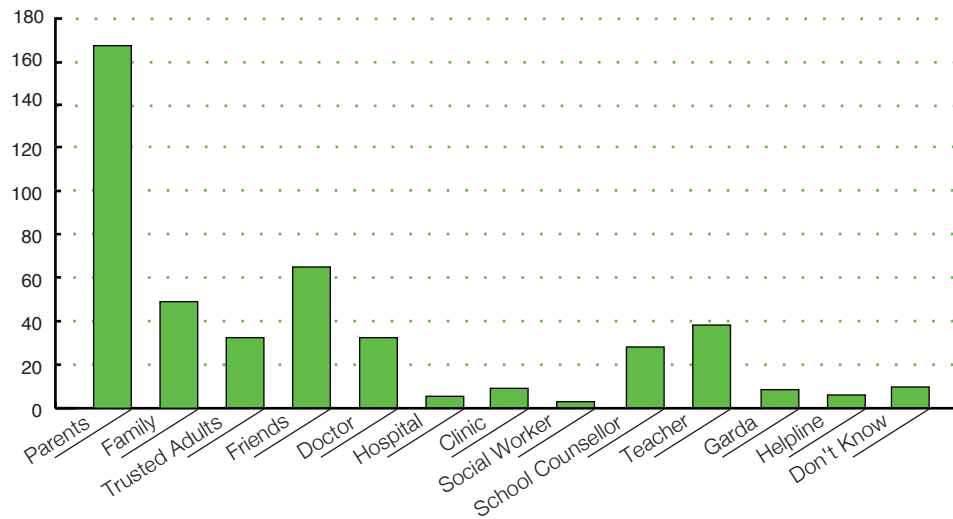


Note: Respondents may have indicated that help would be sought from more than one source

### If yes, who would you go to?

168 respondents stated they would go to their parents, and a further 52 stated they would go to a family member. 62 stated they would go to friends for help and 35 would go to a trusted adult. 28 respondents named school counsellors and 39 named teachers as sources of support. 6 respondents stated they would contact a help line. Others saw drug/alcohol misuse/use in terms of a medical problem and would seek help from a G.P. (35) or a Hospital (6). 3 would seek help from psychiatrists and 8 would go to a clinic. 8 stated that they would go to the Garda. 9 stated that they did not know where to go.

**Table 6 (b)** : Chart showing where respondents would seek help



## Part Two: Supports and Services for Young People

### If not, why not?

90 people stated they would not seek help.

They gave the following reasons:

- Fear of getting into trouble
- Afraid
- Embarrassed

### 45% of respondents gave one of the above as their reason for not seeking help

Fear of parents finding out - 11% gave this as their reason for not seeking help. The remainder gave the following reasons:

- Do not want to get involved
- Deal with it myself
- Don't care

### What help do you think should be in place for you and your friends if you had a problem with drugs or alcohol?

Just over a quarter of respondents (127) did not reply to this question.

The following were named by respondents as people and services where they would access help and support:

Counsellors	27%
Centre providing on-going support and rehabilitation	17%
Support Groups	15%
Medical Service	15%
Help Line	6%
Further information	5%
Family or Peer support	5%
Psychiatric Service	2%
Do not know	8%

***The need for confidentiality and a non-judgemental approach was stressed.***

### Focus groups

#### Awareness of Supports and Services in Enniscorthy

Many said that they knew of no services in Enniscorthy, or in Wexford. Young people from rural areas stated that they would go into town for support if it were available. Others in a rural group said that they believed there were services in Enniscorthy and Wexford towns, but that they did not know who or where they are. They would like to see community centres with someone available two days a week to talk about problems.

#### Seeking Help

The focus groups discussed their views of young people who used drugs. They commented that – ‘drugs are stupid, there is no point to them’ and ‘they damage your health and there are plenty of other ways to have fun’. Others said they disliked and were afraid of drugs and others did not care about drug users. Overall, there was a negative perception of young people who used drugs.

The focus group discussions reinforced the responses given in the survey. When discussing what they would do if a friend were taking drugs, responses varied from not knowing what they would do to feeling it was not their business. Some said that although it would change the relationship, they would try to help a friend. Again, it was stated, by some, that their parents would ‘kill them’ but others said they would seek support from parents.

Teachers and guidance counsellors were named as a possible source of support, although some were unaware of staff in their school with a counselling role.

They would go to someone they know really well and to a counsellor with expertise in the area of substance misuse. The C.B.D.I. worker is a possible support, if known to the young people and some sought a guarantee that parents would not be told. They prefer to talk to someone they knew and trusted rather than someone they had never met before. On further discussion on the question of a worker telling parents, they agreed it might be possible with their consent, but otherwise it would be a ‘breach of trust’.

Others would use a help line, but would not talk to someone in person, saying it would be ‘too hard’. Some young people identified friends as a source of support.

One group stated that their parents were the ‘last people they would go to’, even though they acknowledged that once parents were over the initial shock and disappointment, they would probably be supportive.

## Part Two: Supports and Services for Young People

### Main Points

- Parents, other family members and friends are seen as a source of support if respondents themselves or a friend had a problem with drugs/alcohol. 34% (168) of all respondents would go to parents for help. A further 10.6% (52) would go to another family member and 12.6% (62) would talk to friends.
- 13.7% (67) would seek help from school counsellors or teachers, but a number of focus group members were unaware that there was staff in their school with a counselling role.
- The need for someone to talk to in confidence was emphasised repeatedly. Respondents specified that they would talk to someone who knew something about drugs. The current situation with regard counselling young people under 18 years is that counsellors, both working privately and those employed by the South Eastern Health Board, are obliged to seek consent from parents and guardians before providing counselling services. Best practise is to put a contract in place with parents concerning boundaries around confidentiality and to work with both parents and young people. There are certain disclosures which counsellors are obliged to report to authorities regarding, for example, abuse or concerns about suicide.
- Respondents seek an assurance of confidentiality.
- Almost half of the respondents (45%) stated they would not seek help because they 'would get into trouble' or because they were afraid or embarrassed. Some stated that they would not seek help for fear of parents finding out.
- There is a lack of knowledge and awareness of the services and supports, which are available in Enniscorthy.
- Responses in the previous section show that supports must be in place for young people from the age of 12 years.

## Part Three: Recreational Activities and Needs of Young people

The purpose of questions in this section is to learn the recreational activities and needs of young people in Enniscorthy and surrounding areas.

A significant percentage (14%) is not involved in any activity, and of those involved in sports activity many are involved through school.

### 7. Which of the following activities, if any, are you actively involved in?

**Table 7 :** Activities respondents are involved in

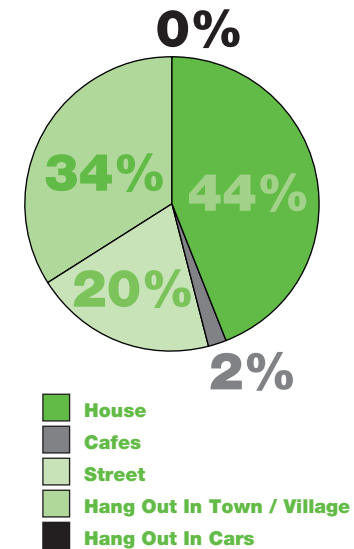
Activity	No. Participating	% approx
Sports	347	71
Youth Club	129	26
Guides and Scouts	16	3
Community Games	111	23
Church Organisations	31	6
Music and Drama	103	21
Other - listed below	51	10
Dance	23	5
Swimming	6	1
Other Sports (Boxing, Martial Art, Tennis, Snooker, Fishing, Skating, Rowing, Athletics, Hockey)	15	3
Horse Riding	5	1
Red Cross	1	0
Training Dogs	1	0
None	70	14

*Note that respondents may participate in more than one activity*

### 8. How do you spend most of your free time?

270 respondents spend much of their free time in their own or a friend's house. 206 spend their time hanging out in their village or the town and 121 spend their free time on the street. Only 10 spend their time in cafes and 2 hang out in cars. 13 did not reply to this question.

**Table 8 :** Chart showing where young people spend most of their free time



*Note: respondents may have indicated more than one free-time activity.*

## Part Three: Recreational Activities and Needs of Young people

### 9. If you are going out in the evening or night, where do you go?

The questionnaire offered a number of options, which are shown in the table below and more than one option may have been selected

**Table 9** : Night time activities respondents are involved in

Night Time Activity	No. Of Young People	% approx
Youth Club	94	19
Pub	55	11
Street	175	35
Cinema	335	68.5
Disco	233	48

Respondents identified other activities they were involved in. 64 stated that they spend their evenings in a friend's house

### Other night time activities named are listed below:

	%
Community Centre	1
Fishing	1
With Friends	4
Boxing	1
Clubs	1
Pool Hall	1
In cars	2
Down Town	8
Babysitting	1
Swimming	5
Dogs	1
Smoking	2
Working	1
Farming	1
Hang around shops	5
Sports Activities	9
Dancing	5
In old buildings	2
Concerts	4
Parties	1
Internet café	1
Pitch/field	8
None/No reply	42

Some respondents indicated more than one freetime or night time activity.

These figures show small numbers involved in other activities at night and a significant number, 42 (8.6%) have not named any activity.

In relation to young people who state they have used drugs, 16 state they are not involved in any activity and 41 are not involved in any activity other than

sports, which includes school sports and may not refer to additional sports.

50 spend some of their free time and leisure time at night hanging out in the street or in their village. 47 go to pubs or clubs in the evening/at night.

### 10. Have you any ideas about what is needed for free time activities for young people in your area?

#### Ideas and suggestions made by respondents are:

69 (14%) stated they wanted a sports facility, with a variety of sports options available Access is an issue for young people.

64 (13%) stated they would like to have a Youth Club. Many of these were from Enniscorthy town where there is no Youth Club at present. They also said that they would like to be included in planning the activities of the youth club which should be 'in tune' with what teenagers want.

48 (10%) sought organised activities offering a variety of activities and females stated that they wanted a greater variety of activities.

38 (7.8%) stated they wanted discos suitable for their age group

37 (7.5%) seek a playground or park with outdoor facilities suitable for their age group.

Half of those seeking these facilities are girls who are seeking a greater variety of options, including soccer and dance/drama activities.

34 (7%) said they would like an arcade.

25 (5%) sought an indoor activity centre with a variety of options and some non-sporting activities.

## Part Three: Recreational Activities and Needs of Young people

23 (4.7%) stated they wanted a place to hang out, which is also suitable for the winter and designed by teenagers.

16 (3%) suggested a mall, an indoor shopping area where they can hang out.

8 (1.6%) stated they wanted a community centre in their area.

### **Some specific activity based facilities named were:**

Skate park (18)

Bike park (6)

Bowling alley (13)

Pool/snooker hall (16)

Swimming pool should provide additional amenities and facilities.

*Note: Not all respondents submitted ideas about activities/ facilities in their area and some made more than one suggestion*

### **Main points made by respondents:**

Existing facilities be more accessible to young people

- School sports facilities and other sports facilities in the community accessible to young people in the evenings and at weekends.

Youth Club in Enniscorthy

- Young people should be involved in the design and planning activities in the youth club

Activities

- A greater variety of activity options should be available to all young people.
- Greater support given to the development of sporting and other activities for young women.
- Activities must be affordable.

### **Focus Groups**

The focus groups were asked what their ideal would be in terms of recreational facilities.

The options named were based on responses to the questionnaires.

**Playground:** This should include swings, trampolines etc. and a place for indoor activities. Again, options for a range of activities was sought. A playground provides a base for outdoor and indoor activities. One group stated they wanted sports facilities appropriate for their age group.

**Youth Club:** This could be based near out-door facilities and have organised day trips, and activities e.g. horse riding, soccer, snooker/pool tables, video games. Youth clubs facilities and activities should be open more often and at weekends when young people have spare time.

**Sports Facilities:** Young people, through their responses to the questionnaire and in focus groups identify the need for a variety of accessible and affordable options, including soccer for males and females, tennis, badminton, swimming pool/snooker, hurling and running tracks  
(*Sports activities are both in school and out of school.*)

**Hang-out area:** An area to just kick a ball around, or somewhere such as the school in the middle of the village, to hang out.

**Disco:** Discos should be local, held in roomy venues with good facilities and good DJs playing a variety of music. Again, it was stressed that under 12's should attend discos for their own age group, perhaps the local community centre. Parents should not be in attendance.

**Place to hang out:** This could be a mixture of all of the above and locally based. Sports facilities should be available to young people out of school hours and at weekends. A place indoors, with pool/snooker tables, video and arcade games provided as well as somewhere to just spend time with a certain amount of privacy.

One group stated that parents should not be allowed. They wanted somewhere warm to hang out!

The groups sought facilities in every big village such as Ferns, Bree, and Camolin as well as in Enniscorthy.

It was pointed out that it is cheaper to get drunk than to go to the cinema or participate in other activities.

### **Main Points**

- 44% of respondents spend their free time at home or in a friend's house. 25% of respondents drink alcohol at home or a friend's house.
- 34% of young people spend free time in the street or hanging out in town or village. An important part of social life is to hang out with friends.

At least 14.5% of respondents drink alcohol in the town/village or other, often hidden, locations near where they live. A further 11% drink alcohol anywhere, but did not identify specific location.

- A greater variety of activities were sought.
- Access to existing facilities such as school sports grounds, GAA pitches and local facilities, particularly in the evenings and at weekends.



### Part Three: Recreational Activities and Needs of Young people

- Affordable activities and facilities. It was pointed out that it is cheaper to get drunk than to go to the cinema or participate in other activities.
- Young women seek better access to sports facilities and to a greater variety of facilities and activities.
- Availability of youth clubs, projects and community centres in the evenings and at weekends.
- Responses from Part One relating to age of first use of alcohol/drugs show that, if diversion is to be used as a strategy for prevention of dangerous risk taking behaviour, that recreational options, which meet their needs, must be in place for young people of 12-13 years.

## Findings and Main Recommendations of Enniscorthy CBDII

**Finding:** Many young people take drugs/alcohol in out of the way places, consequently placing them at even more risk.

**Recommendation:** Awareness-raising with young people and their peers in relation to situations that they find themselves or peers in taking into consideration:

- Prevention
- Crisis Intervention
- Safer behaviour
- On-going support

**Finding:** Many young people drink alcohol at home or in friend's houses.

**Recommendation:** Raise awareness raised among parents/guardians about issues around parental responsibility.

**Finding:** Young people, some as young as 12, could come into the adverse notice of the local Gardai when under the influence of alcohol and /or drugs.

**Recommendation:** While there is a Juvenile Liaison Officer (JLO), this is shared with New Ross and is considerably overstretched. There is an apparent need for both a JLO and a Gardai Juvenile Diversion scheme in this area.

**Finding:** Many young people are unaware of supports/services in their area.

**Recommendation:** Promote existing supports/services among young people and their families, community groups and all those working with young people.

Further evaluation is needed to identify gaps in services for young people concerning issues of

addiction and mental health. In addition, information sharing regarding services and programmes should be encouraged between agencies.

**Finding:** Young people identified the need for Youth clubs in Enniscorthy town and rural areas. They sought a greater input into how youth clubs are run and into development of programmes and activities. Young people feel that youth clubs/facilities should be available at nights, weekends and when they are off school.

**Recommendation:** Voluntary and community groups support young people and communities to establish local youth clubs. Young people should be involved in the planning and design of youth clubs, activities and programmes. Research into the feasibility of providing access to youth clubs/facilities at weekends and whenever they have the spare time.

**Finding:** Young people should have better access and use of existing facilities, sports grounds and school facilities.

**Recommendation:** Examination with relevant bodies into the feasibility of making existing facilities more accessible to young people and into the possibility of providing local supervision.

**Finding:** Young people want assurances of confidentiality when accessing support/counselling.

**Recommendation:** The views of young people should be taken on board in any review or development of policy, by statutory or voluntary agencies, concerning protocol with young people seeking support/counselling. Our research indicates that young people would welcome an adolescence counselling service on a drop-in basis.

**Finding:** Young people identified a Helpline as support/service they would access because of its confidentiality.

**Recommendation:**

- Helpline number and service more widely publicised in locations used by young people.
- Helpline provided on a 24-hour basis, or at least at times when young people are most likely to seek support or advice, i.e. weekends and evenings.

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2002

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### **Newspapers**

*The Irish Times*  
September 18th 2003

## Appendix i

### Questionnaire

Enniscorthy Community Based Drugs Initiative

Please fill in this questionnaire as fully and honestly as possible.

This questionnaire is confidential and cannot be traced back to you or your school.

**Q1.** Male  Female

**Q2.** Age

12 years  13 years   
14 years  15 years   
16 years

**Q3.** Do you live in, or within walking distance of  
Enniscorthy Town  A Village

**Q4.** Have you ever drunk alcohol? Yes  No

If yes, go to Q. 4.1 If no, move to question 5

4.1. How Often?

Once  Special occasions  Monthly  Weekly

4.2. What age were you when you started to drink? .....

4.3. Where do you generally get alcohol?

At home  From friends  Off-licence

Public house  Disco

4.3. Where do you drink it?.....

**Q5.** Have you ever drunk alcohol? Yes  No

If yes, go to Q. 5.1 If no, move to question 6

5.1. What drugs have you used? .....

.....  
.....

5.2. What age were you when you first used drugs? .....

5.3 How often have you used drugs?

Once  Special occasions  Monthly  Weekly

5.4. Where do you get them?.....

.....  
.....

5.5. Where do you take them?.....

**Q6.** If you or a friend had problems with alcohol or drugs, would you go for help? Yes  No

If yes, who would you go to? .....

If no, why not? .....

What help do you think should be in place for you and your friends if you had a problem with drugs or alcohol?

.....

**Q7.** Which of the following, if any, are you actively involved in?  
If you need to tick more than one box per question, do so.

Sports activities  Community games

Youth club  Church organisation

Guides/scouts  Music/drama

None  Other

**Q8.** How do you spend most of your free time?

In your own house	<input type="checkbox"/>	On the street	<input type="checkbox"/>
In cafés downtown	<input type="checkbox"/>	Hang out around town/village	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Q9.** If you are going out in the evening where do you go?

If you need to tick more than one box per question, do so.

Youth club	<input type="checkbox"/>	Cinema	<input type="checkbox"/>
Pub	<input type="checkbox"/>	Disco	<input type="checkbox"/>
Street	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Q10.** Have you any ideas about what is needed for freetime activities for young people in your area?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire  
Questionnaire by Enniscorthy Community Based Drugs Initiative

## Appendix ii

### Directory of Services

#### A sample of activities for young people in Bree:

Variety group	Sineád Long	054-47602
Handball	Liam Maher	054-47903
Borrmount Golf Club		054-47820
Bree Athletic Club	Paul Kinsella	053-28158
Slaney Olympic Athletic Club (seniors)	Mick Kehoe (Crossabeg)	053-38455
Bree Community Games		054-47706
Boys Football	Syl Doyle	054-47870
Girls Football	Betty Kelly	054-47851
Senior Football	Paud Moriarty	054-47824
Soccer	Jack Spratt	054-47587
Bree Youth Club		054-47843
Bree CCE	Breda Donohoe	054-47620

#### A sample of activities in the Ferns area:

Soccer	Tom O'Brien	054-67982
Hurling	Ben Bernie	054-66536
Camogie		
Table Tennis	Fiona Forrest-Bills	054-66124
Irish Dancing	Deirdre Furlong	
Youth Club (Church of Ireland)		
Fiona Forrest-Bills		054-66124
Boxing Club	Enda Killeen	054-66002
Athletics Sliabh Bhui Rovers		
Handball		
Moto-cross Club	John Gethings	054-66391
Multi Media Centre		
Historical society	Denis Kinsella	
Equestrian Club	Fiona Gahan	
Musical Society		
Dramatically Society		

#### A sample of activities in the Enniscorthy town area:

Ferns Diocesan Youth Service (FDYS)	Maireád Duffy	054-34574
In FDYS building:		
1. Myriad Dance	Deirdre Grant & Brid Malone	086-8763552
2. Tae Kwan Do	Trish Kenny	087-6390370
3. Brigins	Mary Ann Carley	054-34394
4. Drama	Michael Dunbar	054-34532
5. Irish Dancing	Ann Connolly	054-36446
Templeshannon Community Project	Murt Flynn	054-37511
Brownies		
Enniscorthy Dance Academy	Martina Leacy	087-9897375
Swim Club	Mary Ruth Tobin	086-8074817
Irish Dancing	Roisin Lindsay O'Brien	
Tae Kwan Do		
Boxing Club	Danny Byrne	
Soccer ET	Nicholas Murphy	054-34090
Ajax Athletics	Winnie Rossiter	054-36401
Dancing	Keith Walsh	
Irish Dancing	Maureen Grannell	
Ballet	Irish Academy, Waterfront	
Ballet	Jane O'Brien, St. Senan's.	

#### List of numbers of services available:

Community Based Drugs Initiative, Francis St. Wexford	053-21691
South Eastern Health Board Community Care	053-23522
Ferns Diocesan Youth Service, Francis St, Wexford	053-23262
The Cornmarket Project, WAP, Malin St. Wexford	053-44931
Drugs Helpline	1800 459459 051- 373333
Aiseri	053- 41818
Aislinn	056- 8833777