



Midland Regional Drugs Taskforce

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PRESS RELEASE

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MINISTER AHERN LAUNCHES FIRST MIDLAND REGIONAL DRUGS TASK FORCE ACTION PLAN

The first ever plan to tackle substance misuse in the Midland Region was launched today by Mr. Noel Ahern, T.D., Minister of State with Responsibility for the National Drugs Strategy.

Under the governments national drugs strategy 2001-2008 the Midland Regional Drugs Task Force (MRDTF) is one of ten set up across the country. The aim of the MRDTF is to deliver a more co-ordinated response in tackling the problem of drug misuse. The membership of the task force reflects a four county interagency collaboration that includes voluntary organisations, community groups and specific interest groups. The Midland RDTF was established in 2003 with the guidance and support of the National Drugs Strategy Team (NDST) under the aegis of the Department of Community Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (DCRGA), the lead government department for the National Drugs Strategy 2001-2008.

After undertaking a comprehensive consultation process in the Region, the Midland RDTF working with its co-ordinators drew up the first Midland RDTF Action Plan. The plan was completed during 2005 and submitted to the NDST and DCRGA for its consideration and approval for government funding.



This plan is not a static document and therefore is subject to changes and alterations made to it by the Taskforce during its lifetime. In relation to this, the membership of the Taskforce, along with the staff, will endeavour to ensure that all the relevant parties are kept informed of such changes as they occur. The NDST will continue to support and monitor the progress of the implementation of the plan.

Quotes

Chairperson: Jack Taaffe

Jack Taaffe the Independent Chairperson of the Task Force said the “he believes that this Action Plan identifies the needs of the Midland Region and that achieving the actions listed in the plan will go a long way towards addressing the current drugs issue and supporting individuals, and families who are facing the daily battle to lead lives free from drugs”.

The Chairperson stated “ that the members in partnership are committed to the challenge of advancing the development of local needs, and assisting in the sourcing of the necessary funding where gaps and deficiencies may exist in the availability and delivery of services”.

Co-ordinator: Julie Scully

Speaking at the launch the RDTF Co-ordinator, Julie Scully, stated that “this plan is covering one of the fastest growing regions in Ireland and therefore will need to be very dynamic in its delivery if its to be effective. The Taskforce itself is one element of this but the local communities and those living and working at grassroots level will really be the main force behind the implementation of this plan”.

The detox and treatment services so badly needed in this region will be largely at the mercy of the planning process – in the meantime the Task Force can and will progress a range of measures across the four pillars of education/prevention, supply reduction, treatment/rehabilitation and research.



Consultation Process: Brian MacNeice Genesis Consult:

"The consultation process was very comprehensive and I am confident that the Action Plan reflects the needs identified by people through that process."

"We met with a wide range of people throughout the Midlands and this plan is the result of their input, ideas and suggestions."

"The consultation process has created an expectation that must be delivered on. This is an **action** plan. The focus now needs to be on delivering the plan."

Small Grants Scheme Update

The first initiative of the taskforce is the small grants scheme, which was advertised in September and is aimed at stimulating activity among the voluntary, and community sector across the region to tackle the drugs problem. The scheme has been very successful and has received 40 submissions from a range of groups from local resident committees to Regional Voluntary organisations.

The response to the Scheme has demonstrated the level of awareness of the community and voluntary sector to the substance misuse issue in the region and their willingness to get involved with the taskforce in tackling this issue.



ENDS

Notes to the editor

- The Minister of State has responsibility for the National Drugs Strategy and Community Affairs at the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs and for Housing and Urban Renewal at the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government.
- The consultation was carried out in 2005. The consultants (Genesis Consult) engaged with 50 organisations and individuals and held four public meetings. A free phone line was also made available to the public.
- Small Grants Scheme applications per County:

Laois:	13
Offaly:	10
Longford:	05
Westmeath	12
Total:	40