

DLR Drug and Alcohol Task Force

Partnership Handbook

A Handbook agreed between relevant participating partners to guide the membership, aims, functioning and operation of the Dun Laoghaire Rathdown Drug and Alcohol Task Force (the Task Force) and the aligned legal entity, the *DLR Drug and Alcohol Task Force CLG* (the Company)

Agreed as a document in progress at meeting of the un Laoghaire Rathdown Drug and Alcohol Task Force, on

December 5th, 2019

DLR-DATf Handbook

Mandate

The Dun Laoghaire Rathdown (DLR) Drug and Alcohol Task Force (the Task Force) is recognised by government as an inter-agency partnership, consisting persons from community, voluntary, & statutory sectors, public representatives and independent others, who are assigned a local coordinating role in relation to the National Drugs Strategy¹. The Task Force is also assigned responsibility to make funding recommendations to relevant government agencies and departments, as appropriate, and most especially to the Department of Health Drug Policy Unit (DPU) and to the Health Service Executive (HSE Addiction Services), in line with funding, policy and other parameters as set by these and other bodies, and in accordance with service agreements and other procedures that arise from the receipt and expenditure of public monies.

The Task Force as a Partnership

A key, distinguishing feature of the Task Force's role in responding to substance misuse is that it is undertaken through partners working together in preparing and implementing an integrated local strategy. In this manner they ensure locally-based responses complement existing or planned drug programmes and services and are in keeping with local needs as identified. The part played by individual Task Force members in representing their particular agencies or sectors is pivotal to the success of the initiative and this requires their active participation in all the Task Force's work, a shared role in decision-making and a shared commitment to promote co-operation and collaboration and to invest time, energies and organisational resources, as appropriate. In the absence of these commitments, made in good faith, and in the spirit of dedication to public service, the Task Force would be unable to function.

As Task Force decision-making can have broad impact, particularly in recommending the assignment, and expenditure of public funds, its decisions therefore need to be accountable and the various activities it sponsors, should be within specified parameters, and should not involve matters for which it does not have responsibility, capacity or competence.

Legal certainty

Like similar operations and bodies across the publicly funded sector, its decisions may at times become legally challenged, or contested through other means. In these circumstances it is important that the Task Force have legal certainty and governance guiding its operations, thereby providing oversight, and ensuring its formal decisions are in keeping with due process and procedure, and also that the necessary protections are afforded to Task Force members and to those, including staff, who are assigned duties on its behalf, and are also afforded to members of the public, beneficiaries, and others, who are affected by its decisions. The *DLR Drug and Alcohol Task Force CLG* (the

¹The current, National Drug Strategy is *Reducing Harm, Supporting Recovery, 2017-25* (RHRSR) <http://health.gov.ie/blog/publications/reducing-harm-supporting-recovery-2017-2025/> It succeeds the National Drug Strategy 2009-2016 <https://www.drugsandalcohol.ie/12388/>

Company) legal, incorporated entity, registered with the Irish Companies Office² was established (2019) to provide this certainty.

It is acknowledged that there is a unique challenge in providing legal certainty to a partnership body, such as the DATF, bearing in mind that authority can reside only with a specified, named entity, in this case the Company, and that some prospective partners in the Task Force, more widely, might encounter obstacles in, becoming an equal partner in this entity³.

Handbook

This document constitutes a Partnership Handbook, agreed between the Company and the Task Force partners. It outlines aims and objectives and guides formation, membership, structures, succession, conflicts of interests, and other matters. The Handbook strives to establish an equality of status across the different partners, in so far as is practicable, within legal parameters.

VISION

The Task Force has incorporated a Vision and Ethos as summarised by the statement in the National Drug Strategy, that aims to create:

“A healthier and safer Ireland, where public health and safety is protected and the harms caused to individuals, families and communities by substance misuse are reduced and every person affected by substance use is empowered to improve their health and wellbeing and quality of life”.

This statement is seen as underpinned by the following six values:

<i>Compassion</i>	A humane, compassionate approach focused on harm reduction which recognises that substance misuse is a health care issue
<i>Respect</i>	Respect for the right of each individual to receive person-centred care based on his or her specific needs and to be involved in the development of their care plan.
<i>Equity</i>	A commitment to ensuring people have access to high quality services and support regardless of where they live or who they are.
<i>Inclusion</i>	Diversity is valued, the needs of particular groups are accommodated and wide-ranging participation is promoted
<i>Partnership</i>	Support for maintaining a partnership approach between statutory, community and voluntary bodies and wider society to address drug and alcohol issues.

² During 2020, the Company will also be applying to have charitable status.

³For example, the HSE’s National Financial Regulations (NFRs) restrict employee’s participation in funded structures. <https://www.hse.ie/eng/staff/resources/financial%20regulations/> as in NFR 31.7.8: “As a broad policy, HSE Managers should not be appointed as Directors of non-statutory Agencies with which the HSE has a SA/GA in place, due to the potential conflict of interest in such areas as performance management, strategy direction, issues of litigation etc. “

Evidence-informed

Support for the use of high quality evidence to inform effective policies and actions to address drug and alcohol problems.

Co-ordinator

A Task Force co-ordinator is appointed full-time by the Company, which has responsibility for the conditions of employment and salary and for the coordinator's management and performance. The co-ordinator plays a pivotal role in assisting the Task Force in developing and implementing its Strategy. This requires that the coordinator be pro-active in driving the work of the Task Force and managing its day-to-day operation, including the management of additional staff and resources, the provision of project and financial updates and information to both the Task Force and the Company, and networking and relationship building with other Task Forces and bodies at local, regional and national levels

Additional Support Staff

Additional staff, such as admin support and development worker are employed as required and in accordance with agreed funding lines.

Aims and objectives

The Task Force's core aim is to co-ordinate interagency implementation of the National Drug Strategy in the context of the needs of DLR, with particular focus on actions where it has been assigned a role

More specifically, Task Force objectives are to:

- 1) Provide an up-to-date overview on the nature and extent of drug and alcohol misuse in DLR, through:
 - a. the gathering and analysis of all relevant information from the organisations and services involved, including
 - i. information from HSE and HRB regarding treatment and harms, including drug-related deaths, etc.
 - ii. information on drug related crime and community safety issues
 - iii. information on drug-related child and family welfare matters including school attendance
 - iv. information as assessed through consultations, discussions and submissions from community members.
 - b. identifying, and reporting, on emerging issues to inform the development of policies, at local, national and other levels,
 - c. promoting the actions needed to address these issues, as appropriate, and
 - d. developing and reviewing periodic Strategic Plans.
- 2) Support and strengthen a community focus on drug and alcohol misuse through:
 - a. mobilising an integrated cross-sectoral response at local level

- b. ensuring an appropriate representation across localised sectors and also
 - c. ensuring TF members, and those involved with implementation, are provided induction, information, training and updates on all relevant aspects of the Task Force's functioning.
- 3) Monitor, evaluate and assess the impact of funded projects and make decisions on continued priorities having regard to current needs and available funding.
 - 4) Develop cross Task Force initiatives and networking arrangements for the exchange of information and experience, the dissemination of evidence and best practice.
 - 5) Coordinate and align activities with other relevant initiatives and programmes in the Task Force area, particularly those involved in responding to social need, and also with other Task Forces and services within the wider, social, health, education and other services.
 - 6) Provide such information, reports and proposals to the Office of the Minister of State for the National Drug Strategy, as may be necessary from time to time.

Accountability

The Task Force, through the Company, is held accountable for public funds, by meeting the requirements of respective Service Level agreements and other agreements and ongoing adherence to Company (and/or Charitable) regulations, through annual reports and audited accounts, The Task Force recommends for funding only bodies who also meet such requirements, where these are specified.

Membership

Membership of the Task Force includes personnel from Community, Voluntary and Statutory sectors, each of whom, represents a specific interest group or body, as deemed appropriate, in accordance with this Partnership Handbook. The Task Force also includes public representatives as nominated by DLR county council and in addition the Task Force has independent members who have been separately recruited by the Task Force, and whose membership is ratified by the Company. The Task Force will undertake to achieve a gender balance in its membership, whereby no less than forty percent of members are either male or female. In circumstances where a gender imbalance arises, the Task Force will request that nominating bodies for new members nominate in a manner to restore balance.

The Company's Board of Directors may individually be members of the Task Force, but also, in addition, will convene separately, as a Board, to exercise legal and financial oversight, for the Company's affairs, as required.

Community Sector

Community representatives are nominated to the Task Force following ongoing and renewed consultations with relevant community groups and other fora, and with attention to the following:

- An appropriate geographic spread, taking account of local needs and their distribution, and also taking into account communities of interest, especially when this arises as a pressing issue in relation to drugs and alcohol.
- A track record in community development.
- Experience of and understanding of drug and alcohol issues.
- An ability to report to Task Force colleagues on developments and emerging issues within their respective communities and to report back on these matters.
- A direct service user perspective from either/both individual or family perspective.
- Networking capabilities across DLR as a whole.

The Task Force takes direct and exclusive responsibility for identifying community groups and others that should be represented on its structures and to review these arrangements, as appropriate.

Voluntary Sector

Voluntary agency representatives include persons from agencies whose work directly involves drug and alcohol issues, straddling treatment, family interventions and young people's prevention. Representatives are expected to have an ability to report to the Task Force on developments and emerging issues within the voluntary sector and to report back to the sector, in addition to reporting to their individual agencies.

The Task Force takes direct and exclusive responsibility, in identifying voluntary sector representatives that should be represented on its structures and to review these arrangements, as appropriate.

Statutory Agencies

Agencies nominate persons who provide an authoritative, agency perspective on emerging and developing issues. Typically, the following bodies would be expected to provide representation (+ refers to current – 2020 - members):

- Dublin and Dun Laoghaire Education and Training Board (+)
- Garda Síochána (+)
- Health Service Executive (+)
- DLR County Council)+)
- Probation Service
- Department of Social Protection
- Tusla (+)

The Task Force takes direct and exclusive responsibility, in identifying the particular state agencies that should be represented on its structures and to review these arrangements, as appropriate.

The work of statutory representatives is seen by their agencies as part of their core duties, thus ensuring they have the necessary time, and organisational and other supports, to enable them to undertake their role effectively. Other supports, where appropriate, are provided through the Task Force.

Elected Representatives

The participation of elected representatives, on the same basis as other members, allows them to bring their considerable experience and intimate knowledge of the area to bear on the process. It also affords them an opportunity to influence the drugs strategy being developed by the Task Force for the area and to gain community support for it.

Role of representatives

All Task Force representatives are expected to undertake the following:

- Represent their organisation/community and sector in a thorough and practical manner thereby contributing meaningfully to developing a coherent, functioning inter-agency partnership dealing with the response to substance misuse.
- Sourcing and making available relevant information from their communities and/or organisations, and providing other insights, to help build a profile of substance misuse and related matters.
- Providing assistance in developing appropriate responses to substance misuse.
- Assessing the impact of projects and services through their organisations and communities and offering assistance with any issues that arise.
- Monitoring the situation in relation to relevant projects and services being funded and/or provided through their own organisations or communities, thus ensuring that any emerging problems are highlighted at an early stage, so that appropriate actions can be taken.
- Updating the Task Force on any relevant changes in their communities and organisation that have relevance to its remit.
- Supporting and promoting project evaluations and independent reviews.
- Identifying and ensuring the effective implementation of projects and other initiatives, particularly where their body has a financial role, i.e. either funding provider or recipient.
- Ensuring the prompt processing of income/expenditure and/or payments to project promoters where these arise through their agencies.
- Identifying and bringing to the attention of their organisations and communities any developments that would ensure a more effective coordination of the response to substance misuse.

Duration of membership

There are no formal guidelines regarding the term of office of members of the Task Force, and their tenure is such as to ensure continuity and consistency in the Task Force's approach in responding to the drug and alcohol problems, in its area, and to also take account of emerging and changing needs. Tenure of office of Company directors and officers is in keeping with Company law and charitable code of governance, and in general the Company will look to the Task Force to provide or suggest members in order to fill Board vacancies. The succession, replacement and recruitment of members is processed, in the first instance by the Ops Group (see below), who review the issue of membership on an annual basis with particular attention to monitoring gaps and in having these filled, as appropriate.

Meetings

Task Force meetings are held bi-monthly, and more frequently if need be. A quorum for meetings is one third of the membership. Generally, Task Force decisions are taken by consensus; but where a consensus cannot be achieved, a vote is taken. The Chair has the casting vote in the case of a split vote. Decisions are recorded as decisions of the Task Force and individual positions should be noted. The Company Board of Directors meets quarterly and more frequently if deemed necessary. One such meeting will review and sign off on the annual accounts, and will be followed by the Company's Annual General Meeting.

Chairperson

The Task Force chairperson is either the Company chairperson, or following consultation with the Task Force, a person appointed by the Company chairperson, who in turn is elected by the Company Board of Directors. The Chairperson is not directly connected with funded projects and has responsibility to bring together organisations and individuals from the different sectors to work as a team. The chairperson leads the Task Force and chairs and facilitates its meetings. The chair responsibilities include:

- To ensure the Task Force works towards achieving its aims, facilitating members to participate, to work well together in discussing and deciding issues, to suggest ways of dealing with conflict where this arises
- To ensure members are aware of their responsibility to make meetings effective.
- To act as spokesperson and to represent the Task Force, as appropriate.
- To oversee the development, implementation and monitoring of the Task Force's annual work programme.
- To help to resolve external conflict.
- To convene special meetings of the Ops Group, where this has been deemed necessary

In addition to the above, the Chairperson is also the Coordinator's line manager, and deals with all normal personnel matters (annual leave, sick leave, payments for travel, subsistence, and out-of-pocket expenses, etc) and consults, as appropriate, with the Board, in discharging this function.

Vice-chairperson

The Task Force appoints a vice-chairperson to chair Task Force meetings in the absence of the chairperson.

Media Protocol

Occasionally, the Task Force or members are contacted directly by media to comment on relevant Task Force views or matters. Media representatives are, in the first instance, referred to the Chairperson or if the Chairperson is unavailable, to the Co-ordinator, either of whom will either respond to queries or direct them accordingly, to other Task Force members, as appropriate. The Chairperson deals with any contentious issues that arise in this regard.

Sub-committees

The DLR Task Force has a facility for up to three sub-committees, to progress the ongoing work and development of the Task Force.

Ops-Group

The first sub-committee is the Ops Group, which functions in all instances, and is appointed by the Company.

Its terms of reference are:

- To act as an executive to the Task Force and a liaison between the Task Force and the Company
- To prepare the agenda and other documents for Task Force and Company meetings.
- To make recommendations to the Task Force on all aspects of its functioning
- To oversee the implementation of Task Force decisions
- To oversee the work of assigned personnel
- To oversee financial decision-making

The Ops Group normally meets ten working days in advance of each Task Force meeting, and more frequently if required. The Ops Group chairperson is also a Company Director, either the Company chairperson, or a Director acting with the Chairperson's authority. All members of the Ops Group are appointed by the Company, with due regard to ensuring there is representation from Community, Voluntary and Statutory sectors. Approved Ops Group minutes of previous meetings are noted at Task Force meetings.

Other sub-committees

Either one or both of the following sub-committees will also be in place.

1. Treatment and Rehabilitation (T&R sub-committee)

- To oversee T&R actions (adult, families and youth)
- To identify and assess emerging and unmet needs
- To identify trends and issues

- To explore best practice
 - To submit reports to the Task Force
 - To share knowledge and skills
 - To promote inter-agency cooperation
2. Prevention and Education (P&E) sub-committee
- To engage the community on an informed ongoing debate, about its relationship with substance misuse and related harms, with a focus on specific issues (e.g. alcohol, hidden harms to children, cannabis use), which may change from time to time.
 - To develop information/communication strategies for tackling these harms.
 - To support the implementation of P&E aims.
 - To review and report to the Task Force.

Both these sub-committees agree additional Terms of Reference, as appropriate, and meet on a quarterly basis. They provide for discussion and elaboration on issues, to progress the work of the Task Force. They are not decision-making bodies in their own right unless specifically mandated by the Task Force to be so.

In all instances sub-committee chairpersons are also members of the Task Force. Sub-committees should consist of at least one member from each of the three sectors: Community, Voluntary and Statutory. Additional members may be co-opted by T&R and P&E sub-committees, at their own discretion.

The Chair of these sub-committees provide verbal updates and reports to the Task Force.

Conflict of interest

It is the policy of the Company and of the Task Force that representatives on either entity are not involved in the process of determining decisions that have direct funding impact on their parent body, or that in any other way confer personal, financial benefit. Potential conflicts of interest are identified at the outset of each Company and/or Task Force meetings and members, as appropriate, absent themselves from the relevant part of such meetings when matters of funding, in these instances, are being discussed or decided.

Responsibilities

The duties and responsibilities of Company Directors are set out under legislation. In addition the Task Force has agreed the following code of conduct as applying to both the Task Force and the Company:

- Members undertake to be informed of the Task Force's ethos, values aims and work programme, and to promote and support its work, to act in the Task Force's best interests and to represent it fairly to external bodies and fora.
- Members undertake not to speak in their capacity as a member to the media or other public fora without the prior knowledge of the Chairperson and will ensure that their comments reflect Task Force policies and priorities.

- Members undertake to abide by the values that underpin the Task Force and its work, and to ensure they do not bring the reputation of the Task Force into disrepute or undermine its values and ethos.
- Members undertake to declare any direct conflict of interest, to draw attention to matters that might be viewed as conflicting, when these arise and to submit to the Company's judgement on these if this is required.
- Members undertake to embody the principles of good governance and to abide by organisational policies and procedures.
- Members commit, within reason, to attend all relevant meetings, to familiarise themselves with agendas and other documentation, and to contribute to discussions and decisions, as appropriate.

Procedures

The following rules and procedures apply to Task Force meetings.

- The Task Force meets bi-monthly on an agreed weekday and time, as follows: February, April, June, September (early), October (late) and December; Ops Group meetings are scheduled accordingly (ten days in advance of each Task Force meeting).
- Scheduled Board meetings are: February, June (AGM), September and December.
- Task Force meeting dates and times are scheduled and agreed at the December meeting of the previous year; ditto for Ops Group and Board meetings.
- As a norm Task Force meetings are 90 minutes, Ops Group are 60 minutes and Board meetings are 30 minutes.

Meeting rules

The remaining rules of procedure apply to both the Task Force meetings and to Board meetings.

- The minutes of previous, and agenda for next Task Force meeting are prepared and agreed by the Ops Group.
- Reminder of each Task Force meeting is issued no less than seven days in advance.
- Documentation for each Task Force meeting is circulated no later than three days in advance. The Documentation includes
 - Agenda
 - Minutes of previous meeting (for agreement)
 - Last agreed Ops Group minutes (i.e. the minutes of the meeting before the last)
 - Updates, reports and other relevant materials
- All meetings start on time and commence with:
 - Welcome
 - Check on the quorum
 - Introduce new members, as appropriate
 - Acknowledge former members, as appropriate
 - Review the agenda
 - Check on likely early departures

- Identification of conflict of interest, if appropriate
- A personal reading of minutes
- Questions on the minutes / amendments, etc
- Minutes are proposed and agreed or not
- Move to the Agenda
- Ground rules are not pre-set, but participants are encouraged to abide the following as much as possible:
 - Follow the chair's lead and encouragement in making a contribution
 - Participate in discussion and decisions so there is no confusion afterwards on what has been agreed.
 - Remain focused on individual topics as these arise.
 - Bring discussions to a closure with agreement as to moving on.
 - Maintain confidentiality unless otherwise advised
 - Keep within the allotted time
 - Agree a process for resolving difficult issues on item by item basis, especially if they are taking up too much time.
 - Conclude with an action list to be undertaken before next meeting.
 - Remind about next meeting: date, venue, etc.

Occasionally, Task Force meetings are externally facilitated rather than chaired when there is a need to undertake review/planning. A note of these proceedings rather than formal minutes are taken.

Training

Training for Task Force members, for personnel in funded services and others with an interest in drug and alcohol issues, is considered essential to the success of the initiative, particularly as representatives from the voluntary, community and statutory sectors are being asked to work together in a new and innovative setting. The Task Force regularly identifies the training and development needs of members and others, with a view to determining how these needs can best be met.

DATA protection and GDPR Statement

The Task Force and the Company recognise and acknowledge their obligations under the Data Protection Act 2018 and the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) principles, and will at all times uphold the rights of any of its data subjects as laid down and will implement both procedures and principles in according to the its legal activity and scope, as laid out in the GDPR Statement which is attached as an Appendix (not yet completed).

Closing

Substance misuse is a cross-cutting issue which requires organisations and individuals from the community, voluntary and statutory sectors to develop an integrated response, based on a partnership approach. The DLR Task Force, alongside similar task force structures in other areas, local and regional, have developed solid recognition and

credibility as a result of their work, over two decades, especially through profiling and highlighting substance misuse issues within their areas and developing projects to address gaps in services.

A team-based approach is implicit in the task force concept, and the team structure requires visibility at both national and local levels. This Partnership Handbook provides guidance to the team structure at local DLR level. It is a project constantly in progress, and it is envisaged the Handbook will assist the Task Force in moving on to its next stage of development. The Handbook is not written in stone, and it is envisaged that additional guidelines and procedures will be incorporated, according as the situation develops and as operational advice is issued time to time from the office of the Minister of State for the National Drugs Strategy, and the Drug Policy Unit (DPU).

Ends/.... December 2019

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