



Tallaght Drugs & Alcohol Task Force
Report on project activities
2023

Abbreviations

AGS	An Garda Síochána
CAAP	Community Action on Alcohol Project
CARP	Community Addiction Response Programme
CCIA	Community Crime Impact Assessment
CHO	Community Health Organisation
CSPs	Community Safety Partnerships
CYPSC	Children Youth Persons Services Committee
DoE	Department of Education
DoH	Department of Health
DMR	Dublin Metropolitan Region
DPU	Drugs Policy Unity
DRI	Drug Related Intimidation
eCASS	Electronic Comprehensive Addiction Services Solution
Eds	Electoral Divisions
HSE	Health Service Executive
HRB	Health Research Board
iCAAN	Irish Community Action on Alcohol Network
JADD	Jobstown Assisting Drug Dependency
NDS	National Drugs Strategy
NDTRS	National Drug Treatment Reporting System
NHRC	New Hope Residential Centre
NSRF	National Suicide Research Foundation
NUI	National University Ireland (Maynooth)
P&E	Prevention & Education
RHSR	Reducing Harm Supporting Recovery
SA	Small Area
St Dominic's CRP	St Dominic's Community Response Project
SDCC	South Dublin County Council
SDCP	South Dublin County Partnership
SIG	Strategic Implementation Group
SFP	Strengthening Families Programme
SPHE	Social Personal Health Education
SWAN	SWAN Family Support Organisation Ltd
TASP	Tallaght Addiction Support Project
T & R subgroup	Treatment and Rehabilitation subgroup (TDATF)
TDATF	Tallaght Drug and Alcohol Task Force
TDPP	Tallaght Drug Prevention Project
TRP	Tallaght Recovery Project
TYS	Tallaght Youth Service
WASP	Whitechurch Addiction Support Project
YODA	Youth and Drugs Alcohol Service
YPP	Young People's Project

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Introduction

This TDATF Annual Report for 2023 is set out as a practical reference document that can be used to:

1. Assess project progress against TDATF's strategic priorities (Strategic Plan 2022-2026)
2. Review subgroup plans for 2024 in line with TDATF's strategic priorities.

The primary role of TDATF is to implement the National Drugs Strategy (NDS)-Reducing Harm Supporting Recovery 2017 – 2025 through leading an area-based response to mitigate the impact of substance misuse in the Tallaght and Whitechurch areas. Membership of TDATF includes representatives from the statutory, community, voluntary and political sectors. Through a partnership approach, TDATF coordinates a community response to drugs and alcohol across its catchment area. Local organisations are funded to deliver interventions along the continuum of care including treatment and rehabilitation, family support, supply reduction, and prevention and education.

Strategic Priorities

TDATF's strategic priorities set out in its strategic plan, 2022-2026 are:

- 1 Strengthen the prevention of drug and alcohol use and the associated harms among children and young people
- 2 Enhance access to drug and alcohol services in the community that deliver better health outcomes
- 3 Address the social determinants and consequences of drug use in disadvantaged communities through an area-based approach
- 4 Ensure the longevity and sustainability of TDATF through robust Governance, Growth and Development

TDATF projects

The HSE grant eight service agreements with community drug and alcohol projects in the TDATF area and one service agreement to SDCP as shown in Table 1.

Table 1 HSE funded projects

Agency Acronym	Full Agency Title
Lorien	Barnardos Intensive Family Support Project for children, young people and families impacted by substance misuse
CARP	Community Addiction Response Programme (Killinarden)
JADD	Jobstown Assisting Drug Dependency (Jobstown)
WASP	Whitechurch Addiction Support Group
St Aengus	St. Aengus Community Action Group
St. Dominic's	St. Dominics Community Response Project
TASP	Tallaght Addiction Support Project (Fettercairn)
TRP	Tallaght Rehabilitation Project
SDCP	South Dublin County Partnership

The Drugs Policy Unit (DPU) fund five TDATF projects through two channels of funding: 1) Dublin Education Training Board, and 2) South Dublin County Council as shown in Table 2.

Table 2 DPU funded projects

Agency Acronym	Full Agency Title
TDPP, Foroige	Tallaght Drug Prevention Project, Foroige
St Aengus	St. Aengus Community Action Group (Tymon)
CARP	Community Addiction Response Programme (Killinarden)
FCYC	Fettercairn Safety Project
KCCYP	Killinarden Safety Project

Table 3 Current TDATF Board Members (January 2024)

Name	Rep/Organisation
James Doorley	Chairperson
Superintendent Bróna O' Reilly	An Garda Síochana
Inspector Barry Mills	An Garda Síochana
Inspector Ger Coomey	An Garda Síochana
Fionnuala Keating	HSE Services
Larry O'Neill	South Dublin County Partnership
Martin MacEntee	DDLETB
Grainne Meehan	South Dublin County Council
Maria Nugent	South Dublin County Council
Kerri Smith	Barnardos
Andy Leeson	Foroige
Cathal O' Sullivan	Probation Services
Paul Murphy TD	Political
Sean Crowe TD	Political
John Lahart TD	Political
Francis Noel Duffy TD	Political
Mick Duff	SDCC Councillor
Charlie O Connor	SDCC Councillor
Alan Edge	SDCC Councillor
Lyn McCrave	SDCC Councillor
Emma Murphy	SDCC Councillor
Cathy Murray	Community
Niamh Guerrine	Community
Samantha Duff	Community
Pat Daly	Voluntary
Layton Kelly	Voluntary
Eugene Donnelly	DSP
James Kelly	Co-option
Patrick Nevin	Tallaght Travellers CDP
Joe Rynn	CYPSC

HRB data (2022)

HTB data for 2022 indicates that of 12,009 cases treated, 37% were new cases. 69% attended services as an outpatient, the remainder were inpatient, low threshold, prison, and GP. The main problem drug among all cases was cocaine, accounting for 34%, which represented a 25.7% increase from previous years. Opioids, followed by cannabis (18.7%), and benzodiazepines (10.7%) were the next most prevalent. Heroin accounted for 86.6% of all opioid cases. Polydrug use was reported by more than 50% of all cases. Among new cases with polydrug use, alcohol (50.5%) was the most common additional substance, followed by cannabis (40%), cocaine (30%), and benzodiazepines (24.8%).

There was a clear difference between main drug preference and age. Cannabis was the main drug that generated a need for treatment for under 19s; cocaine was the main drug for those aged 20–34 years, and opioids were the main drug generating treatment for those aged 35 years or older.

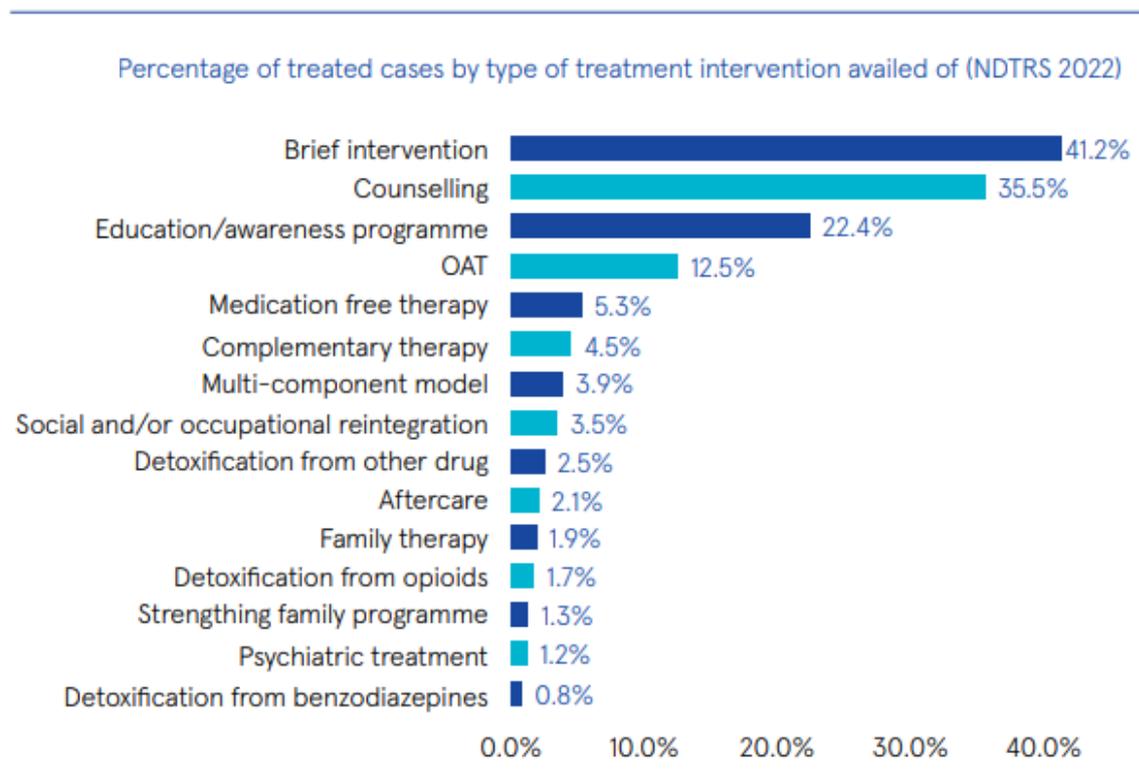
The median age for new female cases was 29 years. Over 50% of cases were under 35 years; 5.7% were aged 50 or over. Nearly 14% were homeless.

The median age for new male cases was 27 years with 56.7% under the age of 35. The most common drugs were cocaine, opioids and cannabis in that order.

The percentage of cases who were parents was 47.3%.

Interventions are shown in Table 4.

Table 4 Interventions for treated cases in 2022



HRB supplied TDATF with treatment results for 2022 (Tables 2 and 3). It is noted that of all cases only 1% (10 individuals) of cases who self-identified as an Irish Traveller.

Table 2 Substance misuse statistics for TDATF area in 2022 (HRB data)

No. cases receiving an intervention from TDATF funded services by main problem drug in 2022¹⁶.	Cases
Cocaine	247
Heroin	144
Alcohol	136
Affected Family Member (Concerned Person)	107
Cannabis	76
Other Opiates	36
Benzodiazepines	26
Other	11
Total	783

Table 3 Main Problem Drug Treated by TDATF Funded Services in 2022

Number of Problem Drugs	Cases	% of total cases
Two	211	26.9%
Three	110	14.0%
Four	36	4.6%
Five	20	2.6%
Total	377	48.1%

Strategic priorities and actions

The following section takes each of TDATF's strategic priorities and assesses project progress in 2023 with a brief description of the actions that have been delivered.

Strategic Priority 1: Strengthen the prevention of drug and alcohol use and the associated harms among children and young people

Action 1: Fund effective education and prevention services

Connect 4 Detached Street Work Project

The pilot ran from April 2022 to October 2023, and an external evaluation was published on its completion. The pilot consists of four street workers, one of whom is a team leader, and an advisory group comprising representatives from Tallaght Probation Project, Dublin and Dun Laoghaire Education and Training Board, HSE YoDA service, and community drug services. The advisory group meets every six weeks.

The outputs and outcomes have been substantial. The project has engaged 500 children and young people such that the quality of their lives has been transformed, and the project has been warmly received by the communities it serves. In a final evaluation, 90% external stakeholders rated the service as effective or very effective. The parents of young people have endorsed the project, and interagency engagement has been strengthened.

Please refer to the external evaluation conducted at the end of the pilot (appended to this report). One of the recommendations arising from the evaluation was to write up the Connect 4 model of working which is unique to West Tallaght. This has been completed and is also appended to this report.

TDATF Education and Intervention Worker

An Education and Intervention worker was appointed in May 2023 with the following job description:

1. To collaborate with key stakeholders to highlight and respond to the impacts of substance misuse.
2. To highlight drugs and alcohol harms and work to develop more sustainable policy responses to substance misuse locally and nationally.
3. To improve capacity at local level to communicate and promote evidence informed strategies and exchange best practice.
4. To develop appropriate structures to support the participation of various sectors (Community, voluntary, statutory & political) in the work of the TDATF
5. To support the TDATF to review emerging needs / and prioritise responses
6. To integrate policy and research into the work of the TDATF its sub structures and projects.
7. To perform other duties as appropriate to the post which may be assigned from time to time and to contribute to the development of the post, while in office.

Tallaght Drug Prevention Project (TDPP)

TDPP runs a wide range of supportive and targeted programmes and activities for young people, supported by the Young People, Prevention Education and Support subgroup which meets regularly.

Key outcomes in 2023 are summarised as follows:

Programmes and interventions for young people: 163 young people engaged in a range of activities including the NFSN young persons support programme for young people living with substance misuse in the home, the Putting the Pieces Together training which included nitrous oxide and vaping, Real U training, lunch clubs, youth cafe, Foroige Leadership for Life Programme, and participation in the community spirit awards programme.

Programmes and interventions for parents and families: 83 parents and guardians took part in a range of activities including SFP and the Parent Plus Adolescent Positive Parenting Programme.

Training, Organisational and Policy Development: 10 staff and volunteers completed the SFP programme and 2 TDPP staff members attended the Putting the Pieces Together Train the Trainer programme.

TDPP ran over 20 programmes during the year, including Community Spirit Awards, SFP, summer programmes, YPSP programme, Leadership for Life programme, Jobstown Targeted Café, Futsal, PTPT programme, LGBTI drop in, Ukrainian drop in, Ukrainian English learning group, PRO-social group, key working, one-to-one programmes, and referral.

Engagement with schools

At the Prevention, Education and Support subgroup meeting in November 2023, it was reported that local schools Mount Seskin/St Marks are seeking support from TDATEF in relation to drug education to compliment the mainstream SPHE programme. Youthreach have also contacted TDATEF, requesting support for its programme.

TDATEF continue to promote TDPP and the supports they can offer schools / young people has made Youthreach is also more aware of the Drug Education supports from Foroige.

The TDATEF coordinator has met with DoE and they have given the go ahead for TDATEF to support schools and compliment the SPHE in whatever way is deemed appropriate and in consultation with schools.

The Education and Intervention Worker has linked with local secondary schools to create awareness and harms associated with using Nitrous Oxide. Poster awareness campaign competition planned post Easter to create discussion, education and debate on this hidden harm that is not been publicised enough.

Priorities for 2024

- Education / Prevention & Schools
- Mental Health
- Cannabis / Nitrous Oxide / Vaping
- Capacity Building
- Workshops/training

Action 2: Work with TDATF funded education and prevention services to develop a template to capture the impact of their services

TDATF is developing a system so that DPU-funded projects can easily provide monthly updates on progress. An outcome-focused workplan for 2023 has been completed.

Highlights in 2023 include:

- Recovery Month was a huge success. Over 150 people attended the recovery walk and several stakeholders showcased their services to support the health and wellbeing of those working towards recovery.
- Education/Prevention in schools: Go ahead from DoE to provide drug education in line with SPHE. Several local schools have asked for drug education support.
- Community Development principles: Meeting held with SDCP and the TDATF Education and Intervention worker to draw up an awareness-raising programme of community development principles and build on capacity.
- CARP highlighted the need for support and training about menopause for women in addiction, particularly mental health issues associated with this time.
- Connecting for Life: developing an information resource booklet on parental mental health.
- Connect 4. Raised concerns that the local trouble in Dublin city centre recently has meant that ethnic minorities are no longer attending football. TDATF has raised the issue with local policing forum
- THC vapes are an emerging need as many vapes available are unregulated.
- Gov.ie- public consultation now open on vaping, Alan to share link & is also open to collaboration on any awareness / information campaigns around smoking or vaping. Gov.ie- public consultation now open on vaping, Looking for collaboration on any awareness / information campaigns around smoking or vaping.
- YODA/HSE: TRP ran a drama in Tallaght theatre on cannabis and other client-produced pieces.
- Slaintecare: YODA is to integrate more closely with CAMHS teams, and is supporting other service providers on dual diagnosis, planning, and development.
- Significant gap nationwide waiting time to assess needs. Autism/ADHD clients struggle to socially make connections. Discussion around AS I AM and how services locally can take responsibility for needs of children or young adolescents with disabilities accessing treatment and education. Upskilling available.

Work plan priorities for 2024 have been identified as:

- Supporting drugs education programmes in schools, sports clubs and family resource centers.
- Awareness / education: cannabis, vaping, nitrous oxide
- Identify opportunities for collaboration to make information / awareness campaigns more effective and engaging for members of the community and services within the community to support referral pathways also.
- Identify opportunities for continuous professional development for staff and volunteers working in prevention and education projects.

Action 3: Engage with the Department of Education (DoE) to secure their representation on TDATF

TDATF met with the DoE to discuss drug education in schools. DoE agreed that TDATF can support and compliment the SPHE programme in schools as appropriate and in consultation with the relevant stakeholders in schools.

TDATF has contacted DoE on this issue and plans to request that DoE is represented on the TDATF Board. This is an action for early 2024.

Action 4: Work with local schools and other education providers to develop an effective young person led drug education programme in schools

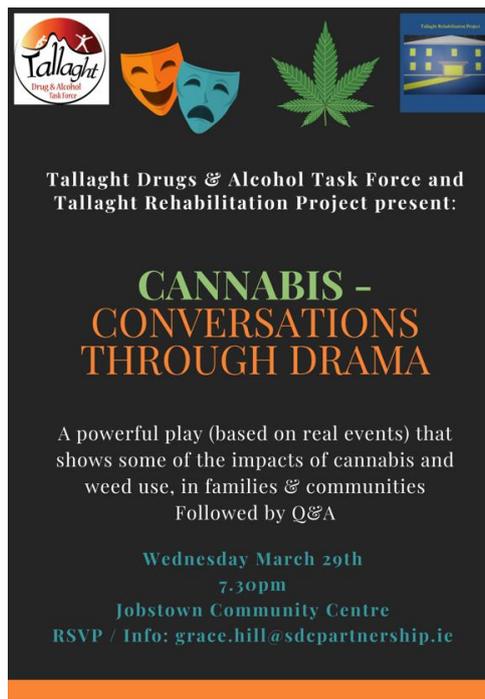
In partnership with TRP we took their drama, focusing on the harms associated with cannabis use, on a short roadshow. In addition to performing this at the Celebration of Recovery, we brought it into Jobstown Community School, Mount Seskin Secondary School and Tallaght Theatre. The poster is shown in Fig 1.

Additional capacity to develop this action has been made possible by the appointment of the TDATF Education & Intervention worker in early 2023. She has linked regularly with SCP and HSCL cluster groups throughout the year.

The Terms of Reference for a scoping exercise was developed in late 2023 and the tender which has been developed from the TOR will be published in January 2024. This piece of work aims to 1) identify best practice in drug education, 2) assess the current level of demand for drug education in the TDATF area, 3) review the status of drug education, and 4) provide evidence-based recommendations to effectively meet need.

The Prevention & Education subgroup is exploring additional ways, outside of schools, to promote information on harms of various substances, mainly cannabis, vaping and nitrous oxide.

Fig 1 TRP's drama performed at Tallaght Theatre as part of the Celebration of Recovery



Action 5: Review membership of local, county, and regional committees to maximise TDATF influence in prevention policy and strategy (CYPSC, JPC, LDC, PPN)

The aim of this action is to ensure that TDATF has an increased influence in key policy forums and can gain better insights into the national strategy and development of policy. Appropriate representation will help to raise awareness of the work of TDATF.

In 2024 TDATF has committed to reviewing its membership in the context of need, good governance and also on foot of whatever recommendations are made in the independent review of TDATF Structures.

Action 6: Promote access to parenting and family programmes for services engaging with high-risk families

There are two ongoing programmes which were further developed in 2023.

1 Lorien Project

This project has been strengthened by a new nationwide Barnardos initiative delivered through the Lorien Project which has established five wellbeing sites in the country. The McUilliam Estate in West Tallaght has been chosen as one of these. The aim is to deliver services to improve the mental health and wellbeing of children and parents living in the area. This has been facilitated by using a family-centred, evidence-based approach to build resilience.

2 The Strengthening Families Programme (SFP)

SFP has been delivered by TDATF for many years. It is currently coordinated by Foroige under TDPP and supported by JADD, Barnardos, TDATF and Tusla Le Cheile. Eighteen families graduated in January 2024, and excellent attendance records were achieved. A full evaluation of the 2023 programme will be conducted by Foroige later in 2024. The programme attendance is growing each year with an ever increasing demand for this programme. More space has been needed and the local community centre facilitates extra room space. There is the possibility of a bigger venue next year for the graduation. Referrers must be trained in delivering SFP to support the families being referred. Families are now returning after going full circle to attending previously with their own children to now with their grandchildren which is testament to how effective the programme is and the benefits it brings to families in the community.

The Connect 4 Project has provided TDATF with an opportunity to meet families and young people, where they are at. Open communication with families who are experiencing a number of issues, including substance misuse, poverty and mental health issues, is an opportune time to signpost to other supports provided by SDCP, the HSE and so on.

Increasing the pathway for referrals in 2024 is paramount to its continued success. Stigma needs to be reduced so that it becomes attractive to any family within the Tallaght and Whitechurch areas who are looking for support around family issues. This evidence based programme continues to offer simple and effective tools to promote better family communication and resilience to issues emerging, often but not always because of substance misuse.

Action 7: Continue to develop and support Connect4, the SDCP street work pilot initiative as an enhanced area-based prevention approach

The evaluation of the 18 month Connect4 pilot highlights many positive outcomes for young people and wider communities in Killinarden and Jobstown (see evaluation appended to this document).

Mental health and family support have been key themes emerging from the pilot, and a direct outcome has been the development of other programmes.

Outcomes that the Connect 4 project has achieved include:

- Improved mental health among young people who engage with Connect 4, and their families
- Improved wellbeing
- Young people have entered and progressed in education
- The project has strengthened interagency working relationships
- The Connect 4 model has been written up and printed, making it available to other areas

Action 8: Support the roll out of awareness raising campaigns to enhance drug education and prevention

- TDATE increased its capacity to achieve this action by appointment of an Education & Intervention worker in 2023.
- A vaping programme was piloted between TDPP and TDATE and this has led to a collaborative piece being developed currently between the intervention worker from TDATE and Slainte Care Healthy Communities Health Promotion Officer. The Education and Intervention Worker is working with local secondary schools to create awareness about the harm associated with, and as a result of, using Nitrous Oxide. A poster awareness campaign competition is planned for after Easter 2024 to create discussion and debate on this hidden harm that is not being publicised enough.
- TDATE have used various platforms to highlight harms associated with substance misuse, including campaigns through the Echo and social media. Recovery month has provided a useful opportunity to promote wellness and progression to all age groups. Facilitating an information stand in Tallaght Hospital last September proved extremely helpful in terms of connecting the community with addiction services vital to their needs. It also proved helpful to staff who were unaware of many of these services in terms of referral, mainly from physio departments.
- TDATE published an article in the Big Issue in December 2023 to highlight services that are available in the TDATE area to support those affected by drug and alcohol issues. This was written in response to the fatalities and injury associated with contaminated heroin that circulated throughout the area. JADD and CARP are the two community harm-reduction services in Tallaght, with St. Aengus hopeful that they will be able to resume their harm reduction service in 2024. St. Aengus Community Action Group were forced to close their harm reduction clinic temporarily in 2023 due to the rising cost of insurance.
- The HSE were quick to engage as the increase in overdoses became apparent. JADD in Jobstown operates an assertive outreach program, supporting the most vulnerable and sometimes isolated or homeless drug users in our community. CARP runs a homeless drop in, so both services provided frontline services including the administration of Naloxone, which plays a pivotal role in saving lives where an overdose occurs. Currently, there are 16 trained service users in the use of naloxone as well as staff members in many community drug services. The new Circle Peer to Peer programme is to begin for a six-month pilot phase in a number of locations from January, and JADD is one of those locations.

Action 9: Optimise the TDATF website as an effective platform for drug education and prevention and explore the potential for e-learning

The TDATF website has been kept up to date throughout 2023 and now provides a link to the first of a series of podcasts. The first two are titled Survive and Thrive – A Family Affair, and documents how families are impacted by another’s substance misuse.

A YouTube channel has also been set up and QR codes are a helpful tool.

The outcomes from reaching out to communities in this way includes:

- Higher numbers of people using the TDATF website
- Increased awareness of TDATF’s work
- Provision of important education and information that can be accessed anonymously
- Empowering communities to become aware of training and groups, and how to get involved in challenging the drug issue within their communities in a supportive capacity.



LOGO FOR THE TDATF PODCAST SERIES

Strategic Priority 2: Enhance access to drug and alcohol services in the community that deliver better health outcomes

Action 10: Fund effective service responses and person centred supports to address the needs of those affected by drug and alcohol misuse and their families

In 2023, TDATAF continued to make a case for increased funding for frontline community drug services. This was achieved through our involvement in the HSE SLA process where we support each HSE funded addiction service in their appeal for additional funding. In addition, we made the collective case for a permanent increase in funding for ALL services, alongside other LDATAFs, in the LDATAF Pre-Budget submission July 2023 and subsequent meetings with the Minister with responsibility for the National Drugs Strategy, Hildegard Naughton TD. We welcomed the announcement of the HSE in December 2023, in respect of ELS (Existing Level Service) funding increases to TDATAF projects.

TDATF continued to highlight the importance of a continuum of care for service users. Through the TDATAF Treatment and Recovery sub-committee, gaps and blocks are regularly highlighted for TDATAF. Project and service user feedback is crucial to highlighting said gaps and blocks. In 2023, TDATAF ran a recruitment drive across treatment / rehab services, for new service user reps. Addiction services were invited to nominate a service user who felt enthusiastic about creating awareness around the challenges and blocks service users face while accessing treatment locally and in residential treatment. Both JADD and TASP identified two men who were keen to help and now they both sit on the T&R Committee.

Action 11: Increase meaningful progression opportunities (aftercare, community integration) and champion a culture of dual recovery across all services

Continuum of care continues to be active across TDATAF services.

Now in its fourth year, TDATAF and SDCP supported the Tallaght Supports Recovery month, which delivers a range of celebratory and awareness-raising events to widely publicise that recovery is possible and it can transform people's lives. TRP organised an evening programme in the Civic Theatre to celebrate the spectrum of talent from people in recovery.

There were several events held throughout the month in the Tallaght Addiction Support Services. These included a Family Support Respite morning for family members accessing services for support around a family member addiction issue.

TDATF ran a recovery planning group in January 2023, and this led to the Recovery Walk in MacUilliam which was attended by 150 people. This walk was about making recovery visible, reducing stigma and shame of coming out and seeking help from services within your community. TDATAF was delighted to welcome the South Dublin County Volunteers to support the walk and is very appreciative of the support of the community gardai. There was great support in a collaboration with SDCC and Active Cities hosting popup tents with activities to connect the community to services that can provide support. The SDCC mobile library also attended this event and provide free books to all the kids in the area encouraging family time through reading. This set the tone for positive play and how to reduce screen time at home.

Connect 4 held a recovery Cup with 5 teams. SDC Library provided a mobile unit which encouraged families to read together by giving out books, and there was a food truck to ensure everyone got a hot meal.

The outcomes for 2023 include:

- Improved progression opportunities
- More Recovery options
- Increased Recovery Capital
- Improved Rehabilitation
- Reduction: stigma associated with drug use, among young people

Action 12: Sustain and subject to available resources enhance the TDATF Thomas Gilson Support Fund 2023 (formerly known as the Education Bursary fund)

The purpose of this grant is to support service users and family members based on goals of Access, Retention, and progression in Education. The grant is available to people who are currently residing and or accessing drug specific services in the Tallaght Drug and Alcohol Taskforce area. This includes Tallaght, Dublin 24 and Whitechurch, Dublin 14.

The Fund was available from February 2023 and closed once the grant allocation has been expended.

Funding was available for people in recovery from alcohol and substance misuse who wished to explore or progress their educational and or career prospects. In 2023 a proportion of the fund was made available to family members who have been affected by addiction and accessing Family Support services.

Applicants must have a rehabilitation care plan which includes their education goals. They are encouraged to apply through their case workers.

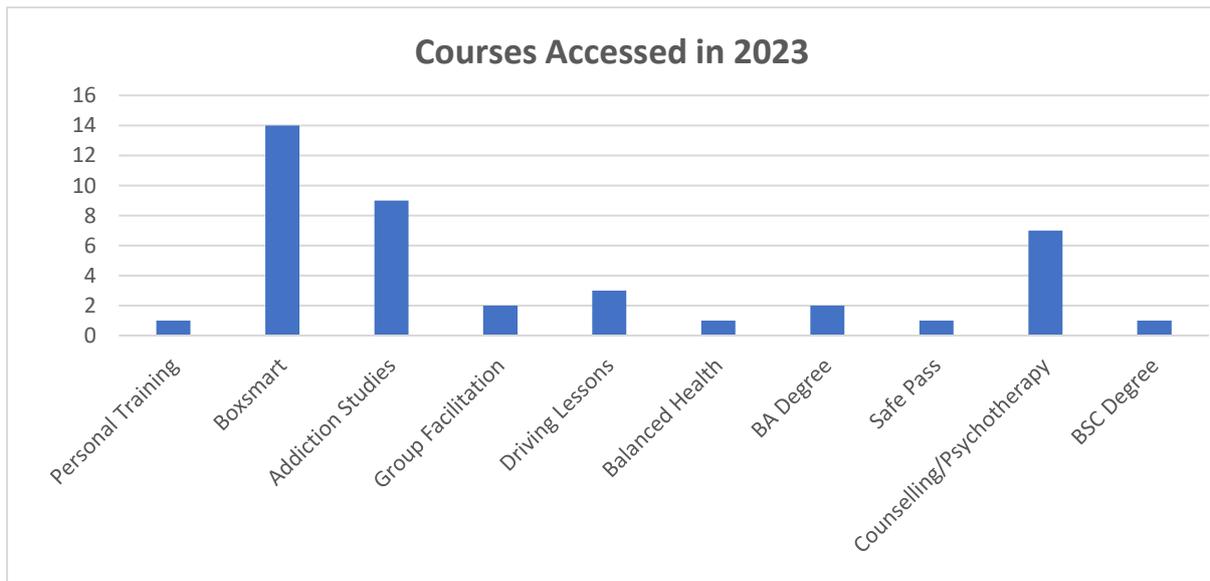
Applications received in 2023:

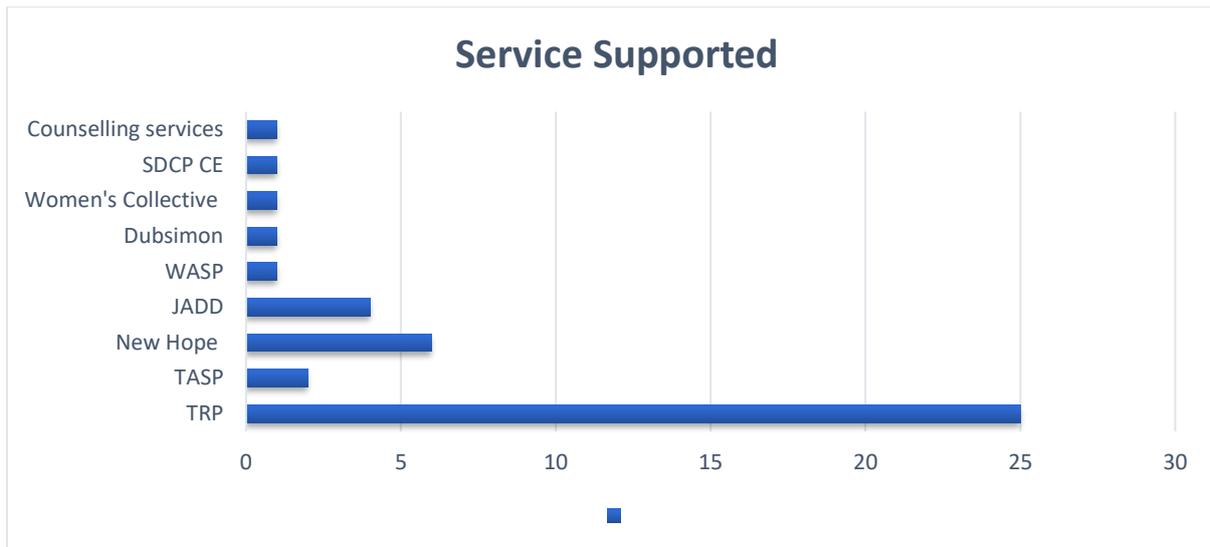
Male = 29 / Female = 23 / Family Members = 6

5 people did not proceed due to personal circumstances changing.

6 were not eligible for the bursary as they did not meet the criteria.

Total Funding spend 2023: €20,473.22





Action 13: Seek and secure additional resources to develop alcohol specific interventions with funded services

Awareness event

The TDATF prevention and Intervention worker held an alcohol awareness stand in 2023 with the following objectives:

- Increase awareness of TDATF's alcohol services and the area covered
- Connect individuals to supports such as AA and Al Anon
- Information provided for those suffering from alcohol and drug-related intimidation.
- Referral as requested for support with alcohol and gambling issues

The stand helped to raise public awareness of community-based alcohol programmes in the Tallaght area and improved access to support for people concerned about their alcohol use.

Pre-budget submission

In 2023, TDATF contributed to the preparation of a pre-budget submission in which it highlighted the ongoing lack of funds to specifically support alcohol prevention and intervention programmes. Without funding, TDATF has only a limited capacity to deliver against this action.

The pre budget submission was prepared by the LDATF Chairpersons network, which includes TDATF representation.

Action 14: Seek funding for additional residential places

TDATF and services continue to highlight the need for additional residential places through the T&R subgroup and HSE. The HSE has updated the T&R subgroup on the process to access Tier4 services.

Currently, the shortage of residential beds is hindering many people who want to advance their recovery from addiction, and there is a risk that if support is not provided in a timely manner, some clients may return to addiction.

Action 15: Engage with Minister of State for Drugs Policy, the HSE and the DoH, for an immediate increase in interim funding to address the emerging needs and mitigate the impacts of substance misuse in TDAF

TDAF met with Minister Naughton TD in September 2023 to highlight the substantial contribution that TDAF services make in response to the impact of substance misuse. TDAF also supported the LDAF Pre-budget submission in July 2023. The anticipated outcomes to an appropriate increase in funding to meet emerging needs include:

- Stronger, more sustainable front line service provision
- An increased capacity to address emerging need
- More efficient and effective services
- A stronger Recovery Community in the TDAF area

Action 16: Engage with the HSE and advocate for funding to provide more residential beds for males and females living in the TDAF area impacted by substance misuse

SWAAT provided a valuable opportunity to highlight this need. TDAF continued to highlight need for more residential places in 2023 as well as advocating for increased funds for residential in our area NHRC.

Action 17: Continue to Identify gaps in provision within Tier 1, 2, 3 and 4 services and work with services to address blocks and challenges

Training

The following workshops (Table 4) were made available to all TDAF project staff. The need for these was identified as a gap in staff skillsets and will help to address some of the perceived blocks in service provision.

Table 4 Training provided for project staff in 2023

Suicide Awareness Workshop	Connecting for Life	1.5 hours	15th September 2023
Pavee Point Training	Pavee Point	2 hours	25th Oct 2023
Chemsex/IPV training	Men’s Aid	2 hours	March 2024
SOAR training	TASP and TDAF	4 hours	20th November
Alcohol Awareness Stand	TDAF	1.5 hours	December

1. Suicide Awareness workshop with focus on individuals and families affected by addiction supported by Marsha Williams Resource Officer for Suicide Prevention HSE. We had 12 people attend this in September.
2. Pavee Point “Pavee Pathways”, this training was attended by 20 people from the Tallaght area from a range of service providers in addiction; all extremely interested in ensuring their services are accessible to members of the Traveller Community

3. SOAR training was attended by 10 professionals from addiction services in the Tallaght area. SAOR (Support, Ask and Assess, Offer Assistance, Refer) offers a step-by-step guide for practice, to guide workers in using a person-centered approach throughout their conversation, encounter or engagement with a person using their service. SAOR supports workers from their first point of contact with a person using their service to enable them to deliver brief interventions and to facilitate those presenting with more complex needs with entry into treatment programmes in line with the National Drug Rehabilitation Framework.

SAOR Training

The aim of SAOR training is to enable you to have a short helpful conversation with someone about their alcohol or other drug use using the SAOR Screening and Brief Intervention model. The training, based on the 2nd edition of SAOR (2017), is delivered using a blended learning approach. Participants complete a short eLearning module on HSEL in advance of a 1-day skills practice workshop.

SWAAT

Ballyfermot DATF and TDATAF joined forces as part of the Supporting Women to Access Treatment initiative (SWAAT) to deliver core training in Trauma Informed Practice. This was followed by a Trauma Informed Champions training, designed to support organisations seeking to implement trauma informed practice at an organisational level. The training was very successful and organisations are now working to implement trauma informed practice into their practices. Please see Action 27.

Scoping exercise for development of prevention and education services

A scoping study to identify drug education needs and capacity in schools was tendered in early February to be completed by March / April 2024. The study had the following aims and objectives:

- A short overview of national policy framework and best practice approaches to delivering drugs education in formal education.
- Detail of current capacity of TDATAF / funded projects in respect of the provision of drugs education in schools
- A picture of what current demand looks like: from schools (primary & secondary) and training centres
- An understanding of the commitment and capacity of schools/training centres, to contribute to work (programme development, roll out, sign posting etc)
- An overview of programmes, models and practices used already, and which can be used/adapted for Tallaght and Whitechurch
- Recommendations re delivery of in school education/prevention service and outline of costings for same.

The outcomes from the study will be published in April / May

Action 18: Ensure that funding for Crack Cocaine services received in 2022 is sustained

This action has been completed, with additional funding secured for 2024 to service crack cocaine services in the TDATAF area. The funding has increased our capacity to target those impacted by crack cocaine.

Intervention for nasal cocaine users

Also, in 2023 a programme for nasal cocaine users was developed by St. Dominic's and TRP which was a specific therapeutic, facilitated process over 12 weeks. Talking sessions included relapse prevention workshops and information about the effects of cocaine on the body. Other sessions were outdoors, including bowling, and going for a meal. Holistic sessions included acupuncture, Reiki, and mindfulness.

A total of four people graduated from the first programme and were drug and alcohol free by the end of the module. It was also noted that people who attended the group had decreased their cocaine and alcohol use and some, for the first time, had a positive and healthy experience of treatment and recovery. A second programme is in preparation with modifications arising from the learning of the first programme, including an additional 4 weeks, mixed gender participation, and a second facilitator.

JADD: Assertive Outreach for crack cocaine users

As part of TDATF's harm reduction response, JADD provides an assertive outreach programme three times (two evenings and one morning) per week. This service specifically targets individuals in the community who report crack cocaine use and who are not engaged with addiction or other services. The assertive outreach service includes the distribution of crack pipes, syringes, etc., and the provision of harm reduction advice and information, food services, and overdose prevention advice. The team conduct brief assessments, and make appropriate referrals, for example, to HSE methadone treatment services.

The primary catchment areas with the biggest demand for services are Jobstown, MacUlliam, Ardmore, Citywest, and Tallaght Village. Demand has grown quickly for this service. To date, JADD has engaged with 136 unique individuals through the assertive outreach service and are now engaging with up to 30 contacts per outing. The team distribute an average of 22 crack pipes, with 8 exchanges per evening. Besides the immediate benefits to society in connection with harm reduction, the contact we have been able to make with crack cocaine users have allowed us to progress some of the individuals to further services, such as SafetyNet Hosting for crack cocaine users who have no access to GP care and Mater Hospital's Hep C peer support service. To date, 16 individuals in contact with the assertive outreach team have completed the Rapid Hep C testing at the Mater, with 3 individuals referred for treatment, and 2 for further bloods.

One of our goals in connecting with individuals through the assertive outreach programme is to progress onto case management support. Individuals with crack cocaine problems often present with complex needs, such as accommodation issues, poor physical and mental health, including breathing problems, blood borne viral infection, and relationship problems with families. We provide case management support to individuals who are engaging with more than one service, with the aim of having a coordinated care-plan in place. This often includes engaging with, and in some cases hosting case meetings, with agencies such as Housing First, SDCC, Approved Housing Bodies, Coolmine Therapeutic Community, Mary Mercer Mental Health Service, and HSE addiction services. In addition, JADD's fixed site harm reduction service is open 7 days per week (reduced times on weekends), with an average of 68 presentations per week. The demand for crack pipes has increased significantly, with an average of 66 pipes distributed weekly.

CARP: Crack cocaine support programme for women

In 2018, CARP set up a crack cocaine treatment programme specifically targeted at women in Killinarden who represent a severely vulnerable target group, most of whom are mothers. In 2021, the HSE started to directly fund the service and this mainstream funding has enabled the programme to provide a consistent level of care to participants, and to expand its service delivery. In 2022, the National Office for Social Inclusion committed funds for 3 years.

The programme is desperately needed because of the devastating impact that crack cocaine has had on the local community in the last 5 years, with children as young as 9 being groomed to carry and deliver crack, and young people of 14 years becoming active in dealing and using it.

The programme uses evidence based approaches and non-judgemental engagement with the community enforcement approach underlying practice. Currently, it is implementing Trauma Informed Practice (see Action 27).

Action 19: Apply the NDRF model to develop integrated care pathways (inter agency, outreach, street work,) for high-risk user

The Work of Connect4 has been noted as a valuable link between community and statutory drug services and young people. The project has been exemplary in its achievements (please see evaluation of pilot, appended).

The importance of outreach was raised in 2023. JADD's work in this area is commendable and it has led to new opportunities, including links with SafetyNet, SDCC, and HSE.

A substantial amount of interagency work was implemented and reported on in 2023. Recovery month presented a further opportunity for collaboration. Currently, there are about 9 women who attend, but characteristic of this cohort, it can be very challenging for participants to maintain attendance. The programme includes facilitated peer support; drug education/harm reduction; access to key working, counselling and family therapy; access to hairdressing, nails and make-up sessions; holistic sessions; referral; referral to primary health care; lunch; access to a shower; and outreach engagement and support. The service currently runs on weekdays. There is a drop-in each day.

Outputs of the programme in 2023:

Key working sessions:	175 sessions facilitated
Brief intervention:	534 interventions facilitated in 2023
Urinalysis:	Over 60 interventions facilitated
Group sessions:	2.5 hours a week, 125 hours delivered in 2023
Crisis intervention:	220 hours facilitated
Interagency meetings, case conferences, and general Advocacy.	Tulsa, DV services, justice, Housing, mental health services, and prison in-reach, over 150 hours facilitated
Outreach:	3 hours weekly: welfare checks, food hamper delivery, hospital visits, off-site sessions due to danger to the life of the client, over 150 hours facilitated in 2023
Food poverty support:	500 hampers issued in 2023

In addition, CARP is supporting women in their efforts to maintain custody of their children who are in the safety planning stage with Tusla. CARP is supporting Tusla to work through care plans to allow them to maintain custody or come to a decision in relation to Voluntary Care.

Strategic Priority 3: Address the social determinants and consequences of drug use in disadvantaged communities through an area-based approach

Action 20: Strengthen the voice of the community through ensuring area wide representation of community reps on TDATA committees.

This action has been taken up by the Education and Intervention Worker. She reached out to all existing representatives: two are active, one is on sick leave, and a fourth has resigned. There has been two resign since I started last May with one existing member remaining. We have three new members with three more members to step on board from Killinarden and Whitechurch and Kilnamanagh.

Actions going forward into 2024:

- Review and modify TOR as required to ensure it remains relevant and accurate. Seek guidance from TDATA re. voluntary and co-opted reps.
- Follow on from reps meeting in Nov 2023. Identify ways to support reps' network, including training, and developmental needs and gaps.
- Collaboration with SDCP Lifelong Learning facilitated an Introduction to Community Development which one of our members signed up for.
- Support pop up events within the community to engage conversation and training and education piece specific for the community.

Action 21: Continue to fund the Community Addiction Studies Training (CAST) Programme

The CAST training has been delivered by St Dominics CRP and funded by TDAF for more than eight years and there continues to be a high demand for place. In 2022/2023, the CAST programme has 22 participants and 18 completed the training. In 2023/2024, the programme has 22 participants. It ends in February 2024.

Action 22: Champion service user involvement

Addiction services were invited to nominate a service user who felt passionate about creating awareness around the challenges and blocks service users face while attaining treatment locally and in residential treatment. Both JADD and TASP identified two men who were keen to participate and now they both now sit on the T&R Committee.

Supervision will be in place to support the engagement and continuation of participation from both service users by the education and intervention worker.

Action 23: Engage with key stakeholders to facilitate their renewed commitment to the TDAF model of community-based partnership through active participation on TDAF committees

TDAF subgroups and committees are active and well-attended. The meeting dates for 2023 are shown below in Table 5. Table 5 Meeting dates for subgroups and committees

MONTH	Project Managers	Treatment & Recovery	Prevention, Ed & Support	Family Support	Executive	Task Force
Jan	11th	17 th	24th		23rd	30th
Feb	22nd	28 th		7 th		
Mar			7th		13th	27th
Apr	12th	25 th				
May			2nd	16th	8th	22nd
Jun	8th	13 th	27th		19th	
Jul						3rd
Aug	23rd		29th			
Sep		5 th		19th	11th	25th
Oct	5th	10 th	17th		23rd	
Nov	22nd	14 th		21st	27th	6th
Dec			5 th			11th

In addition to the above, the TDAF Independent Finance Group met eight times in 2024

Action 24: Participate fully in the roll out of the Data Driven Intervention Model on Drug Related Intimidation and Violence Engagement (DRIVE)

TDAF has been fully participative. WASP has been TDAF rep on the DRIVE oversight committee to date. TDAF has also used the Joint Policing Committee platform to highlight this growing issue. In 2023 WASP secured funding through the Community Safety Innovation Fund (CSIV) to employ a DRI support worker for Tallaght and Whitechurch. Recruitment will take place early on in 2024. It is anticipated that the same worker will sit on the DRIVE Liaison committee.

Action 25: Develop an area-based approach in response to the impact of substance misuse as per Recommendation 7.5 of TDATF research (Aug 22)

Ongoing to some extent due to the level of interagency working with key stakeholders. There is a need for more formalisation, however. TDATF is awaiting some direction to progress this further in 2024.

Action 26: Provide a mechanism to engage all TDATF stakeholders on the decriminalisation debate and articulate the findings

The Citizen's Assembly submission provided an opportunity for open discussion on this subject, but no collective agreement has been achieved to date on this particular issue. A health led response is preferred in principle. TDATF look forward to attending the launch of the C.A report in January 2024 and more importantly, want to see implementation of ALL of the recommendations within it.

Action 27: Explore the potential for the area wide roll out of the Trauma Informed Practice

Trauma Informed Practice (TIP) training was delivered to staff across TDATF and Ballyfermot LDATF in 2023 as part of the Supporting Women to Access Appropriate Treatment (SWAAT) initiative. There were three phases:

- Core training, which consisted of two modules (6 core training sessions) followed by an evaluation.
- Champions Training Experience
- Implementation of TIP withing participants' organisations

In Phase 1, 72 participants completed the training and 40% completed an evaluation at the end. There was an overwhelmingly positive response to the training with 100% reporting they felt more confident in implementing TIP with service users. Of 29 responses, 25 reported they would recommend the training to a colleague in a similar role.

Four themes were apparent when participants were asked what they might need going forward to improve their implementation of TIP. Further training with yearly refreshers; all staff in an organisation to be trained in TIP; support from senior management by managing expectations; time and space for reflective practice, and support with implementation.

In Phase 2, participants were facilitated to understand core management theory, good practice in trauma-informed implementation, how to access and use the TIP national standards in Ireland, and development of a plan for implementation within their organisations. Fifteen staff participated in the training. The final evaluation indicated that this phase was relevant, valuable and informative.

The third phase focused on implementation at an organisational level, which cannot rely on training alone as it requires shifts in approach. Developers of the Missouri Model describe it as 'a profound paradigm shift in knowledge, perspective, attitudes, and skills that continue to deepen and unfold over time.' There are ten essential steps for putting TIP into action which can be accessed at:

The SWAAT Initiative. TIP Training Report and Recommendations for implementation of a Trauma Informed Approach. Sept 2023. Available from TDATF.

Strategic Priority 4: Ensure the longevity and sustainability of TDATE through robust Governance, Growth and Development

Action 28: Explore new and emerging trends (including drug of choice, high risk groups, socio-economic profiles, ethnic origin) through a reporting template that can be updated annually

There is an opportunity to develop this using eCASS. It may present some gaps as not all services are using eCASS. Enclude has been appointed to deliver eCASS reporting training to services in February 2024.

Action 29: Contribute to the evaluation of the Connect 4 street-based initiative

Connect4 is a SDCP, street-based initiative with an advisory committee which helps guide their work. The team leader is managed by the TDATE Coordinator. The evaluation of the pilot was completed in late 2023. The findings are very positive.

Two key outcomes from Connect 4 are:

- Enhanced understanding of need and of the social determinants of drug use in the TDATE area
- More effective targeting of at-risk young people

Action 30: Undertake a review to establish the future level of demand for TDATE services in areas currently outside its catchment and corresponding impact on budgets and future planning

TDATE plan to consult with bordering Task Forces in the first part of 2024.

DOH "AUDIT" may also present an opportunity to highlight this challenge for TDATE.

Health Research Board data indicate that 20% of clients accessing TDATE services in 2022 were resident in the SWRDATE area. Table 6 shows that 100 people attended TDATE services while living in SWRDATE; 24 came from Clondalkin, 18 from Dublin 12 and the remainder from other areas in Dublin. This level of attendance from outside of Tallaght puts additional pressure on TDATE services and an exploration as to why so many attend TDATE services rather than those nearer to where they are living is needed.

Table 6 NDTRS cases 2022 assessed or treated at a service provider located in the Tallaght RDATEF area by area of residence

Task Force area of residence	Number of cases
Ballyfermot Local Drugs and Alcohol Task Force	8
Bray Local Drug Task Force	<5
Canal Communities Local Drugs Task Force	<5
Clondalkin Local Drugs Task Force	24
Dublin 12 Local Drugs Task Force	18
Dublin South Inner City Local Drug and Alcohol Task Force	10
Dun Laoghaire/Rathdown Local Drug Task Force	12
East Coast Regional Drug Task Force	5
Ireland Unknown	16
Midlands Regional Drugs Task Force	<5
North Dublin City & County Regional Drugs Task Force	<5
North Eastern Regional Drugs Task Force	<5
North Inner City Local Drugs and Alcohol Task Force	<5
South Western Regional Drug Task Force	100
Tallaght Local Drug and Alcohol Task Force	340
Total	544

Action 31: Agree reporting template (Outputs, Outcomes, and Indicators) for the TDATEF Strategic Plan 22-26

Completed.

Outcomes:

- Improved impact measurement
- Improved Performance Measurement
- Improved strategy implementation
- Enhanced evaluation across all TDATEF services

Action 32: Continue to work with all funded services to refine the eCASS system and address data collection challenges

This is part of the TDATF Education and Intervention Worker role, linked to action no.28 – both to be progressed in 2024. Outcomes include:

- Improved partnership working
- Reports made as part of SLA process in 2023
- Training provided
- Support provided through SLA process (HSE) and other systems in place for DPU funded projects
- -More cohesive strategy

Action 33: Use the TDATF strategy as a framework for every partner to agree and evaluate collective effort

This has started through monitoring the progress of sub-groups and funded projects.

Action 34: Strengthen relationships in and increase awareness of TDATF in the Whitechurch area

On 15th January 2024, TDATF in partnership with WASP-Whitechurch Addiction Support Project, will deliver an informal session to promote services in the local Whitechurch area. The event will be held at the Community and Youth Centre in Whitechurch.

Action 35: TDATF to support funded services to achieve compliance with relevant regulations (e.g., DoH, HSE)

BCH review of Governance Supports provided to date

TDATF funded BCH to review governance across TDATF services between June and September 2023. Their recommendations are summarised as follows:

- Each project needs to have a strategic plan
- Further training beneficial where staff, board members, and management have the opportunity to share knowledge, co-operate, and gain further strength collectively to secure resources.
- Some project websites require updating.
- Boards of management must embrace governance/good practice and live it in daily operations throughout the organisation.
- Projects are encouraged to look at communications as a means to obtain additional resources, such as making accounts available, and including a governance statement on websites.
- Each project has made significant progress in delivering important governance documents. Further work will be required in 2024.

Other governance support for projects

Support provided through the SLA process (HSE) and other systems are in place for DPU funded projects.

Common Governance and Performance Framework

DoE has issued a letter to all task forces about the development of a new common Governance and Performance Framework (GPF) for Local and Regional Task Forces in line with Action 50 of the National Drug Strategy, 2017-2025. This process will be completed within the first quarter of 2024. TDATF has prepared its projects and organisation for the GBF by bringing each project up to date with its governance through the work of BCH and other consultants.

Action 36: Support funded services with implementation of the National Standards for Safer Better Healthcare

This action is ongoing.

Training was provided in 2022 by Finbarr Fitzpatrick and a report template was issued for projects to use in reporting on progress each year. The HSE rep on the T&R subgroup continues to update members on updates and changes.

In 2023, reports were prepared as part of the SLA process.

Action 37: Continue to appraise the likelihood of future mandatory registration of TDATF as a separate legal entity

Recommendations from the independent review of current TDATF structures will help determine this work. The tender was published in October and BCH was appointed in December, 2023. The report is due back to the Task Force in February 2024.

Action 38: TDATF to undertake a governance review to ensure that existing arrangements are fit for purpose

A tender was published in autumn 2023 to independently review the current model for overseeing and managing the work and governance of TDATF. Actions specified for this work are:

- Desk review: Task Force structures – what works elsewhere.
- Consultation with key stakeholders including TDATF members, Board of SDCP, HSE as main funder and TDATF team staff members within SDCP.
- Review and compare structures for managing other LDATFs including companies limited by guarantee, co-operatives, and other structures.
- To consult with the TDATF Coordinator & SDCP CEO as required
- Development of a detailed SWOT analysis of the existing structures
- At the end of the project, to make recommendations on the future suitability and cost effectiveness of the current and or recommendations regarding a different structure and proposed timescale for such change.

A submission was made to the Government in July 2023, and a subsequent meeting with the Minister was secured, at which LDATFs outlined their requests. The main request was for a permanent increase in funding for Community Drug services. Reps from TDATF also met with the Minister in September 2023 to highlight the needs of Tallaght services.

Action 39: TDATAF to support the work of the Independent Finance Group in allocating additional resources in line with this strategic plan and the TDATAF research and to review existing funding allocations to ensure alignment with same strategic plan and research

Ongoing, regular meetings were held in 2023 with a view to ongoing review and prioritisation of TDATAF funding

Action 40: TDATAF to continue to contribute to national policy by engaging actively in the Co-ordinators Group, TF Chairpersons Forum and in fora/meetings with Department of Health and other key stakeholders

LDATF Pre-Budget Submission & launch July 2023

TDATF engaged with the LDATF pre-budget submission which laid out a persuasive argument for an increase of €3 million in funding across the LDATFs in the budget 2024. There has been a significant increase in demand for drug and alcohol services between 2012 and 2022 but there has been no corresponding increase of funding. This has created an unsustainable situation, given the rise in demand, increased populations in Task Force catchments, and high levels of inflation.

On 5th July, the LDATF network published a press release which highlighted the following:

- Frontline community drug services have seen a 4.5% drop in funding since 2012- while State's health budget has increased by 50%
- Core services to clients being compromised, with staff in some cases being forced to turn vulnerable people away, or to ask them to wait weeks before they can be seen
- Crack cocaine increasingly a problem with a more than 400% increase in crack cocaine cases since 2014

LDATF conference

The LDATF conference was held on the 24th May 2023 in Dublin. The conference was organised by the LDATF Chair Network to showcase the work of the Task Forces, highlight the evidence base for their work in disadvantaged communities, and explore their complementarity with healthcare policy, particularly the Slaintecare Health Communities initiative.

The outcomes from the conference were:

Minister Hildegard Naughton TD confirmed that issues relating to funding difficulties and staff retention have been brought to her attention by LDATFs.

Andrew Montague, Chair Ballymun LDATF: highlighted the importance of a local response giving a sense of local control in responding to substance misuse issues, combined with interagency collaboration. He stressed that the key to effectiveness is the capacity to innovate to meet local needs.

Vinnie O'Shea, National Coordinator Healthy Ireland welcome the Healthy Ireland initiative. €2.3 million has been made available for projects that can impact on the health and wellbeing of communities. The initiative is targeted at all age groups, particularly those in disadvantaged communities. He also highlighted the strong correlation between the priority themes of the European Healthy Cities Network and the work of LDATFs. The new Slaintecare Healthy Communities Programme is focused on defined geographic areas of high deprivation and will provide specific and integrated interventions.

Martin Quigley, Pobal and Suzi Lyons, HRB have analysed the relationship between addiction treatment data and geographic deprivation which shows a clear link between social exclusion and disadvantage and the prevalence of drug and alcohol treatment episodes.

Elizabeth Canavan, Dept of An Taoiseach proposed the following actions to improve the outcomes for communities:

- Intensify existing community development functions to meet priority needs of certain areas.
- Bring renewed focus to deeper engagement with local communities to identify and address needs
- Enhance data analytics infrastructure with LGMA and CSO to better inform planning and implementation of interventions and improve their reach and impact
- Foster collaboration, joint working and consortia approaches to funding applications for services.

Patricia Brennan, Dept of Applied Social Studies, Maynooth University emphasised the importance of community development,

There were several key outcomes from the meeting:

- A question was put to Pobal about classifying communities in terms of deprivation. If a 'wealthy' estate is built adjacent to a deprived community, the classification can change from disadvantaged to above average which has consequences for funding even though the needs remain the same. Martin Quigley acknowledged this and reported that Pobal are working to correct these discrepancies.
- Liz Canavan responded to points about statutory officials not attending local structures by saying that it is because there are too many structures, which are not working as they should, which prevents officials from participating.
- Patricia Brennan emphasised the importance of community development, working with people where they are at, but the findings must inform policy.

Submission to the Citizen's Science Assembly

TDATF made a submission to the Citizen's Science Assembly, following a pre-submission workshop hosted by TDATF on May 18th 2023 that included 6 panel speakers followed by discussion.

First and foremost, we ask that the Government recognises the work of the community drugs sector and directs appropriate resources to enable community drug services to maintain and develop their remit and reach.

Key points in the submission are:

- We are concerned that the Citizen's Assembly will become a focus for discussion about legalisation and the opportunity to consider all the points presented in this submission will be lost. We ask that the Citizen's Assembly prioritises treatment services provided by the community sector in its considerations.
- Since the 1980s, successive Irish Governments have stood over several substantial successes in addressing drug and alcohol issues. Now, we ask the Government to continue to be proactive and to recognise what works well in the current drugs sector, to build on this, and to listen to the experts in the field on what policy changes are required.
- The current 'war on drugs' approach does not work. Drug misuse and the complexities of its impacts on individuals and families are decimating communities. Drugs are both a substantial result and the cause of poverty. We need a change in mindset. Drug misuse should be treated as a public health issue and destigmatised. Stigmatising children and young people can haunt them

all their lives and criminalising them means they may never have a chance to lead productive and happy lives.

- In respect of children using substances, we welcome recent legislation regarding vaping but note that legislation in relation to laughing gas / nitrous oxide cannisters is also urgently needed. We know of some cases in Tallaght where damage caused by misuse of these gases has been detrimental to the brain and lung health of the young people concerned.
- In the contexts of polydrug use and the remit of LDATFs, we feel it is regrettable that alcohol is not being considered as part of the assembly. LDATFs formally took on the brief of alcohol in 2013 but addiction services were responding to the impacts of same long before. NDTRS data (2021) listed alcohol as the third highest main problem drug treated by TDATE funded services in that same year.

Recruitment & Retention research

Adare Human Resource Management was appointed to explore the existing challenges and burdens in recruitment and retention in all LDATEs, and the report was published in March 2023. The research methods included a survey with 29 questions and face-to-face interviews with LTF Coordinators and project managers.

The findings showed that recruitment is a challenge across all task forces. The reasons are primarily uncompetitive salaries and insufficient experience and qualifications on the part of the candidates. The volume of applications received and the inability to offer full time hours were additional challenges.

Retention is a challenge for 83% of organisations, the reasons being uncompetitive salaries, lack of promotional opportunities and, to a lesser extent, insufficient contractual security. However, 17% of organisations reported that retention was good to very good, with staff employed for many years.

The report presented seven recommendations for organisations to adopt at an operational level.