

Submission from Citywide Drugs Crisis Campaign on Review of PPN User Guide 30/04/2019

The National Drugs Strategy *Reducing Harm Supporting Recovery 2017-2025* recognises the importance of supporting the participation of communities in key decision-making structures, so that their experience and knowledge informs the development of solutions to solve problems related to substance misuse in their areas.

Partnership between the statutory, community and voluntary sectors was a major factor in the success of previous strategies and continues to be the cornerstone of the current strategy. Drug and Alcohol Task Forces (DATFs) play a key role in coordinating interagency action at local level and supporting evidence-based approaches to problem substance use, including alcohol and illegal drugs. The DATFs have been key to the development of practical services such as treatment and rehabilitation facilities through supporting and funding local initiatives. Task Forces have also played a key role in harnessing the efforts of community groups, families and local residents and have built partnerships with statutory services and local representatives.

Local Authorities are a partner agency with responsibility for implementation of **Action 4.1.39 in RHSR**, which commits to supporting and promoting community participation in all local, regional and national structures. The Strategy refers to the need for LCDCs to improve links with DATFs through their Local Economic and Community Plans and PPNs have been identified as the structure through which Community Reps are nominated to the Regional DATFs. (This does not apply to Local DATFs, where nomination is through local community network structures.)

Community Reps on Regional DATFs report significant variations in the effectiveness of their county PPNs in nominating and supporting them in their role on the DATF. As well as needing an effective nomination process to be in place, Regional Community Reps require an ongoing forum where there is discussion on drug-related issues in the community and where they can give feedback on the work of the DATF in responding. There is an ongoing challenge in supporting the people most affected by the drugs issue to have a voice at this kind of forum and in developing a linkage group that can facilitate this type of engagement.

Two key recommendations are made based on the experience of Regional DATFs to date:

1. There should be a mandatory requirement for every PPN to have a linkage group that includes a strong focus on drugs and alcohol and related issues and this requirement should be written in to the **User Guide**.
2. The Local Authority and the Regional DATF should work together on supporting and facilitating this linkage group and this shared responsibility should be clearly stated in the **User Guide**.