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Irish Bishops' Drugs Initiative
(An initiative of the Irish Bishops' Conference)

Alcohol/Drugs Parishes Respond

An Overview of Pilot Parish Projects' Responses to Alcohol/Drug Prevention

2008



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I wish to thank all the above sincerely for giving so much of themselves, their knowledge and time in helping with this production, alongside playing such positive roles in making this initiative a success. I hope you will all continue to support the Irish Bishops' Drugs Initiative in its future plans to promote drug prevention at parish level, while sustaining the existing and new projects over the long term. Then, in turn, we will all play a part in preventing the harms caused to many of our parish communities by the effects of drugs and alcohol.

John Taaffe, National Coordinator

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PREFACE

Each one of us is precious in God's sight, loved individually and unconditionally by him. If we do not realise our self worth and unique purpose in life, we can create a vacuum that can be easily filled by drugs or alcohol.

To quote Pope John Paul II: 'Drug addiction is a symptom of a problem in life, of having a difficulty in finding one's place in society, with fear of the future and ending with a flight into a deceptive and fictitious life' (Pope John Paul II to the Participants at the International Congress on Drugs). He quotes psychologists and sociologists as highlighting two causes: (i) a lack of clear and convincing motivation for life, the vacuum of values, and (ii) a search for artificial paradises (*Church: Drugs and Drug Addiction Pastoral Handbook*, Pontifical Council for Health Pastoral Care, Liberia Editrice Vaticana, p. 17).

There are many ways in which parishes can contribute to the prevention of drug and alcohol problems. In fact, many parishes are already responding. If parish schools are teaching the Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) Programme, they are already strengthening young people in their response to drugs. If a parish centre makes a room available to self-help groups such as Alcoholics Anonymous (AA), Narcotics Anonymous (NA) or family support groups, then it is already making a pastoral response to those who need and deserve support.

This booklet is a practical attempt to encourage our local parish communities to respond to drug prevention, and so play our part in trying to keep our communities drug-free, while promoting the responsible and moderate use of alcohol. The booklet was designed on the basis of a pilot study of parishes throughout Ireland, including both rural and urban parish communities.

A parish response may require a few generous-hearted people to give their time and talents in the service of the community. You, the reader, may be called to be that person, or invite someone else who may be interested in making a constructive response. The initiative combines the spiritual with the practical, so that our responses will address the whole person: body, mind and spirit. This booklet and the new handbook on how parishes can respond outline good practice in prevention and early intervention, and illustrate how to make links with the many services engaged in both prevention and treatment.

It is part of our call to be our sisters' and brothers' keepers, and a small response at parish level is a caring pastoral way of safeguarding our young people, families and communities from the harms that can be caused by drug and alcohol misuse.

If we believe in our unique dignity as sons and daughters of God through baptism and that everyone is precious in God's eyes, then we cannot stand idly by and allow the bright eyes of youth to become glazed and aimless, or allow the freedom and self-worth of our young people be swallowed up through drugs or the 'glamour' of alcohol.

Bishop Eamon Walsh



INTRODUCTION

This booklet was produced by the Irish Bishops' Drugs Initiative for parishes as a guideline on ways to respond to the prevention of drug and alcohol misuse at a parish level. It is an overview of a more comprehensive handbook titled *Alcohol/Drugs: Handbook for Parishes,* which will be available to parishes that wish to make contact with the Irish Bishops' Drugs Initiative. This booklet has been designed on the workings of ten pilot parish projects throughout Ireland. The project has been funded and supported by the Irish Bishops' Conference and the National Drug Strategy Team. It will explore the outcomes of the pilot projects over the past two years, as well as offer help to small parish groups that may be interested in making a constructive response to preventing drug and alcohol problems in their local parishes. It outlines good practice in prevention and early intervention and illustrates the need to make links with the many services engaged in both prevention and treatment. As Bishop Eamonn Walsh said to the then Minister Noel Aheran, who had responsibility for the National Drugs Strategy, 'The church wishes to add her shoulder to the wheel along with the state in responding to the challenges of substance misuse'.

There are many activities a parish can engage in, and within almost every parish you can find the leadership qualities needed to implement and carry out a response plan, however small. The Irish Bishops' Drugs Initiative will be available to support parishes if requested. Parishes can make a difference; there are many examples in this booklet that will show the systematic approach we wish to use. The full, more extensive handbook gives examples of the more creative responses made in some parishes. These examples grew from the particular needs and opportunities in specific parishes and will not necessarily be right for others.

Vision: It is the vision of the Irish Bishops' Drugs Initiative to enable parishes to use a pastoral response, in partnership with other service providers, to respond to the primary and secondary prevention of drug/alcohol problems in parish communities.

IRISH CATHOLIC BISHOPS' CONFERENCE

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HISTORY

The Irish Bishops' Drug Initiative (IBDI) was set up in 1997 as a Church response to the growing problem of drug/alcohol misuse in Ireland. Throughout the following decade, the Irish Bishops' Drugs Initiative organised a number of events including a network of national contacts for addiction support and publications, which include *Breaking the Silence, Beyond Maintenance* and the pastoral letter, *Alcohol: The Challenge of Moderation* (2006). The Initiative has been supporting the pilot projects over the past two years. It also produced a DVD called *Find the Balance: Dare to Dream*, which was launched in 2007 and serves as an education tool for the training of young people in relation to alcohol use. It was made available to all secondary schools and youth projects throughout Ireland.

In 2006, the IBDI, with the support of the National Drug Strategy, set up a joint three-year pilot project. The project intends using the unique parish and diocesan structures to access the wider community. These structures are ideally placed to gauge and respond to local needs, while using the parishes and greater communities, in partnership with voluntary, community and statutory agencies, to identify and help address issues pertinent to substance misuse.

Pilot parishes were identified both in and outside of Dublin, ensuring a cross-section of rural and urban communities. A number of parishes were approached and agreed to engage, while others showed an interest in becoming involved. The evaluations of these parishes have been used to formulate a model of best practice for parishes that wish to be involved in the Bishops' Drugs Initiative.

'Come to me, all you who work hard, and carry heavy burdens and I will refresh you.' (Matthew 11:28)



DRUG PREVENTION

Prevention is often misunderstood, so in the following pages we will try to clarify what it entails. In particular, we will look at how a parish can contribute to prevention of drug and alcohol problems. First, let us look at *what* we are trying to prevent then we can look at *how* to prevent it.

PRIMARY PREVENTION

If you are a parent with young children, you may hope to prevent them from ever using drugs. This is called primary prevention. The target group has not yet used drugs, and your aim is to keep things that way.

SECONDARY PREVENTION

If you are a parent with teenagers, you may become aware that one of them has already used alcohol or cigarettes, or even cannabis or ecstasy. You have probably also become aware that teenagers make their own decisions and that you, even if you are the best of parents, cannot 'program' them to never use drugs (legal or illegal).

In secondary prevention the target group have already commenced substance use. Your aim could be to persuade them to return to non-use. This is called the 'drug-free' or 'total abstinence' approach. Alternatively, your aim could be to help them avoid harm, also known as 'harm-reduction'.

As teenagers approach eighteen, many of them start to use alcohol. Most parents take a harm-reduction approach to this, encouraging moderation rather than total abstinence. This is where being a parent gets tough: teenagers have free will; they think for themselves and they make choices that parents don't always approve of.

THE AIM OF PREVENTION

The aim of prevention is to help both young people and adults to be the kind of people who can take care of themselves, be happy, make good choices, good friends and live a balanced and healthy life. This in turn means they will enjoy well-being of body, mind and spirit.

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A parish can help through its schools, its families and the community. The parish is part of the community, which includes youth workers, health services, Gardaí, residents' associations, city and county councils, shops that sell alcohol, people who drink alcohol and use drugs, people who sell drugs and people in recovery from addiction. Some of these people enrich the community, some drain it.

PARISHES AND PREVENTION

Three areas in which the parish can help are schools, families and the community. These are the three major influences on a young person growing up. Young people spend several hours a day in school and most schools provide a drug-free environment for this time, which, in itself, is a great contribution to prevention of substance use problems.

Outside school hours, the strongest influence is your family. Even when a teenager, with a growing need for independence, seems to disregard the family norms, the foundation that has been laid in the previous years does not disappear. Parents need a lot of support, especially during the 'letting go' phase of parenthood, and the parish can help in strengthening families. Training courses in parenting skills or in drugs awareness can equip parents with much needed skills and knowledge.

The community in which we live is also a major influence on our behaviour and attitudes. Sometimes this is a cause for concern to parents. However, communities also offer a huge range of resources and parishes can learn how to avail of these strengths with an 'inter-agency' approach.

We are advocating an inter-agency approach to drug prevention – parishes can provide information about health services, education officers, counselling services, drugs task forces, websites such as www.drugs.ie and diocesan social care agencies. Parishes can also sometimes act as a link with Gardaí regarding problems in the community.

There are many other ways in which parishes can help in prevention. Some parishes facilitate AA, NA and other self-help groups; some have a youth café or other youth services; some provide facilities for treatment services for people with drug problems.

SCHOOLS AND PREVENTION

The aim of prevention is to help young people and adults to develop well-being of body, mind and spirit. How can schools achieve this?

Each school may already be doing this. We often underestimate how much schools contribute to prevention; they do so by:

- Providing an environment without alcohol or drugs for several hours a day.
- Developing the body, mind and spirit of the students, taking a holistic or 'whole person' approach to education.
- Having a substance use policy that addresses the educational aspects and the disciplinary aspects of prevention.
- Teaching the SPHE (Social, Personal and Health Education) Programme.

The parish often shares the responsibility of managing schools and so is uniquely placed to promote good practice in prevention. Prevention is NOT achieved by guest speakers telling shocking stories about the consequences of drug use. This is because young people easily convince themselves, 'It won't happen to me'. Good prevention is based on the sustained, healthy, supportive, respectful, pastoral relationships between staff and students. This is what the parish should promote and this is what should be enshrined in a school's substance use policy.

SCHOOL SUBSTANCE USE POLICY

Every school is required to have a substance use policy. It covers the educational programme and the disciplinary measures for handling incidences involving drugs or alcohol. The Department of Education and Science provides guidelines, and many drugs task forces and HSE education officers offer support to schools in reviewing and implementing their policy.

SPHE

The SPHE Programme is not academic, it is developmental. Students learn by participation. Drugs are not mentioned on every page or in every lesson, yet every module contributes to the prevention of drug problems. The programme fosters skills like decision-making, healthy living and relationship building, and it often enhances the self-esteem of the students. It encourages young people to reflect, discuss, respect each other and take responsibility for themselves.

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FAMILIES AND PREVENTION

Only 15 per cent of a young person's time is spent in school. When they switch from school to home and from home to socialising, they also switch influences. The family is where young people develop their core values, yet parents are often at a loss to know how to cope with teenagers who are becoming indivduals – in other words, developing their own personalities.

Parishes have to be resourceful in responding to parents' needs. Some parents will be keen to do a five-week (one evening per week) course on parent skills or strengthening families, while others may prefer to inform themselves privately through reading literature, looking up websites or contacting help lines, and the parish can provide this information. Any action undertaken should be preceded by a 'needs assessment' to ascertain what the parishioners require.

In response to the needs of families, a Family Support Network has been developed in Ireland to support families dealing with an addiction problem. Families can suffer great distress and shame when a family member becomes addicted, and the Network helps the family to recover its self-esteem.

COMMUNITIES AND PREVENTION

We have been advocating an inter-agency approach to prevention, with Church and State working together. We have mentioned the many groups that can support the parish in prevention, but what does the parish itself have to offer?

The parish is the spiritual heart of the community. Addicts in recovery often say they found themselves in a 'spiritual vacuum' while in the depths of their addiction. People who recover from addiction often discover their soul and their spirit in a new way. The parish keeps God's spirit alive in the community, contributing to prevention in subtle ways through prayers, Masses and baptisms, as well as through its relationships with schools and families and reaching out to its most vulnerable members.

The parish can also aid prevention in a more proactive manner, by gathering information about local services that provide support or training. The parish group can also gather information from within the community about problems and areas that have been neglected. The National Drugs Strategy Team (NDST), which helped to finance this booklet, welcomes 'alerts' from parishes about emerging trends, gaps in services and unmet needs.

ADULTS AND PREVENTION

We have spoken a lot about young people. However, adults too can develop problems with drugs, including alcohol. Parishes can:

- Provide information about counselling, assessment and treatment services.
- Offer support to people in recovery and their families.
- Arrange training for parishioners who want to help and understand more about drugs and addiction.

A more challenging question is: how can the parish, as a Christian community, reach out to those with addiction problems? Some parishes have helped to set up excellent services to cater for addicts; however, it is important that parishes set modest, achievable goals for themselves – tall oaks from little acorns grow.

FAITH AND PREVENTION

'Faith can play a major role in the lives of teens and can be a powerful factor in preventing teen substance misuse. Youth who consider religion an important part of their lives are only half as likely to try drugs as kids who don't, according to American White House research' (American Office of National Drug Control Policy, 2003).

It is important to acknowledge the extent to which the loss of self-esteem, occasioned by the loss of any sense of being loved by God or by one's fellow human beings, can add to creating a climate in which a drug culture can thrive. We should not underestimate the importance of nurturing the inner spiritual resources of those addicted. Spirituality often fails to register on the criteria for successful intervention with drug and alcohol problems. However, a growing body of research indicates that intervention at a spiritual level is important for individuals and families when facing the issues of addiction in the community. Christian spirituality seeks to liberate people and increase their freedom to choose to be people who make things happen, rather than being people who powerlessly accept things that happen to them: 'In other words, when we talk of spirituality, we are talking about behaviours and attitudes that are influenced by a sense of oneself that stems from inside' (Eoin G. Cassidy, *A Faith Response to the Street Drug Culture*, Veritas, 2000, p. 4).

We must remember the success of spiritual fellowships such as Alcoholics Anonymous and other twelve-step programmes that have aided many individuals in becoming and remaining sober, as well as supporting family in self-help, which is founded on a belief in putting one's trust in a higher power, far greater than oneself.

'A Spirituality approach is process orientated and respectful of each person's story. It is not one that requires a large commitment of effort into providing new resources. There are many suitable programmes that currently exist under

headings of self-esteem, personal development etc. The challenge of people of faith, who believe that God's grace works through human tools, is to affirm people to use these tools, and to promote and offer aspects of our spiritual heritage that are not found in secular helping programmes. This may include meditation, prayer, pilgrimages etc' (Eoin G. Cassidy, *A Faith Response to the Street Drug Culture*, Veritas, 2000, p. 4).

'Long before there were science-based health care professionals, people were served by culturally defined healers. The functions of healing were often blended with those of spiritual leadership within the community … If health is more than the absence of disease … then a healer's task … has to do with the quality of life, the richness that is invoked when we truly ask and answer the question, "How are you?"' (William R. Miller (ed.), *Integrating Spirituality into Treatment, Resource for Practioners*, American Psychological Association, 2005, pp. 3–5).

PRAYER

As a parish group we must all remember the power of prayer; whether this means saying a short prayer when we meet as a committee or offering a prayer for any situation arising in our parish, we must believe that prayer can be very powerful. As Pope Benedict recently said: 'Those who pray never lose hope, not even in difficult situations, even situations that are desperate in human terms' (www.catholic.org).

'But if you stay joined to me and my words remain in you, you may ask any request you like, and it will be granted!' (John 15:7)





WHY PILOT PARISHES RESPONDED

We must all remember that drug and alcohol misuse knows no social boundaries of class or race; drugs and drug use is now a common part of modern society across all parts of our country. So why as Christians should we try to play our part in prevention, whether as a concerned person, a parent, a community or a parish?

'We live in the most addictive culture that Ireland has ever known. This addiction manifests itself in various ways, the most destructive being the misuse of drugs and alcohol. For this reason, when I was asked to pilot a parish programme on behalf of the Irish Bishops' Drugs Initiative, I agreed without hesitation.

'People sometimes ask why the Church should become involved in this area and say, "Isn't that the work of the health and social services?" One clear reason centres on the issue of spirituality. Many spiritual writers today say that desire is our fundamental dis-ease and is always stronger than satisfaction. This desire lies at the centre of our lives, in the deep recesses of the soul.

'It is my experience that this unquenchable fire residing in all of us is most pronounced during the adolescent and young adult years. Spirituality is ultimately what we do about that desire, about how we handle our unrest. Many lives today are being destroyed because there is no one to help young people deal with their unrest and channel it in a positive direction, instead of trying to satisfy it with drugs and alcohol. This is surely the role of the Christian community and its leaders' (Fr Oliver V. Brennan, PP).

'Love one another as I have loved You.' (John 15:12)

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WHY OTHER PARISHES MIGHT RESPOND

There are many reasons as to why parishes should respond, in however small a way. Fr Eamon Treanor, a participant from one of the pilot parishes, believes:

'In today's society, many people suffering addiction are the same people as those that Jesus spoke about: oppressed by drugs or alcohol, captivated by the dependency, poor from the addiction … and blind to a way out or a new life in recovery. I have a responsibility to respond as a follower of Christ.

'As a parish we can do three things: 1) ignore it and deny it is happening, 2) recognise the problem and do nothing, 3) recognise the problem and do what we can. If we as a parish are not part of the solution, we then become part of the problem: we enable the problem to continue. As every parish in Ireland is affected by drug and alcohol addiction, and we, as clergy, have to stand alongside many coffins of both young and old, whose deaths came about in some way due to drugs or alcohol, it impacts on clergy and parish communities.

'We need to play our part in helping to address the issue of addiction and prevent or reduce that heartbreak. It affects us all. We were given great support and direction from the staff, which helped us greatly. Since receiving training we don't see drugs or the problem of drugs in our town as overwhelming … we feel more confident. The positive reaction we have had so far, both at public meetings and informally, has given us the encouragement to keep going.

'My message to other parishes considering this type of a response is to try it, you will be surprised. It brings the parish to life. By taking little steps, one or two small efforts suddenly grow without much difficulty. It takes on a life of its own. One person is enough to start the programme. When people are given a taste, and it is something new and stimulating, others will contribute – it is infectious' (Mooncoin Parish Initiative).

'It has been such a positive contribution to building up the community. There is no doubt the problem of addiction has become part of the local agenda and is now being talked about, which means we are more likely to address addiction issues' (CLICKS project).

'It is hard to evaluate some impacts; however, some people in the parish have said they have decided to look at these parts of their lives and change' (Anon).

'We have a stand in the church porch where we display drug/alcohol awareness leaflets and these are being taken very often, which is good. A number of people have approached me in relation to addiction treatment over the past year and that never happened before. I now have the information and knowledge regarding where to send individuals for help' (Fr E. Treanor, PP, Killsaran).

'I invited a number of parents of adolescents, school teachers and young adults, including a social worker, to come together to form an Irish Bishops' Drugs Initiative committee in the parish. They are a very dynamic group of people' (Fr Kevin Fay, Cavan Town).

'To date we have done a survey and this was later followed with an open meeting for parents, who were addressed by experts in the field of drug prevention. The response from those who attended this gathering was very positive and led to the setting up of a five-night programme on drug awareness, aimed primarily at parents of early adolescents. The group learned so much and it was great having the local HSE Addiction Service to facilitate this programme' (Anon).

'We are currently preparing an information pack for every home in the parish so that people will know where to go for help should a drug or alcohol-related problem arise' (Fr Oliver V. Brennan).

PERSONAL INPUT FROM CLERGY – PASTORAL RESPONSE

MOONCOIN PARISH (CHURCH OF ASSUMPTION)

Mooncoin Parish Priest, Fr Eamonn O'Gorman, said: 'Our confirmation drug programme has been running for two years now. It is a faith development programme, which incorporates peer drug education, drug awareness and education for parents and youth leaders. This programme involves the parish community, schools and homes, and links well with the community. These links involve our Young at Heart group (senior citizens) praying for the candidate who is to be confirmed.

'There is a link between the gifts of the Holy Spirit and living our lives free from drugs. How does the Holy Spirit enable us and strengthen us in a world and culture that is so drug-saturated? … Young people (aged sixteen to eighteen) are trained by experts on drug-related issues, which enables them to create the programme for our confirmation candidates, under the supervision of adults. It takes a lot of work. I am blessed to have Christine Kelly, Pastoral Coordinator, in the parish setting up and implementing the programme.'

BLESSINGTON PARISH (CHURCH OF OUR LADY)

'Anyone with an ounce of concern would know that we have a major problem in society today involving young people and drink and drugs. Here in Blessington we are attempting to address this problem through work in the local schools, and the provision of a youth café to provide a safe environment for as many young people as possible. Sporting groups and all involved with young people are being asked to play their part in trying to save lives by delaying the first drink.

'If a recent survey stating that 86 per cent of fifteen- to nineteen-year olds had started drinking when they were just thirteen is true, then the implications of what Dr Conor Farren [Consultant in Addiction Psychiatry at St Patrick's Hospital, Dublin] has to say is truly frightening. Teenage drinking leads to brain damage. If you start drinking at the age of twelve or thirteen, you are up to nine times more likely to become addicted than if you start drinking at ninteen. The issue is now so serious that a community without a programme to help delay people's first drink is a community turning its back on the real needs of its youth.

'In Blessington, we are most grateful to Crosscare and the Irish Bishops' Drugs Initiative for all their help; we know our efforts are like the little boy with his finger in the dyke, but at least we are attempting to do something' (Fr Tim Murphy, PP, Blessington Parish).

RATHCOOLE/SAGGART/BRITTAS PARISHES

'There are so many demands made on our time and, to be honest, that was how I felt at first. However, we all feel the importance of reaching out to those who are vulnerable, and God knows drugs and substance abuse is a big concern. Another priest, who is very involved in this area, once told me that we should be as Good Samaritans – he said he did what he could before leaving the broken man at the inn and going on with his business. He didn't do all the caring himself but did the sensible thing by bringing him to someone who could.

'Responding to drug issues feels like too much because we are not experts – but we don't have to be. As the Good Samaritan, all we have to be is a mediator between those who are vulnerable and those who can do the caring. Looking at it this way, parishes have so much to offer. They can act as pathways of information – a human internet. By using what parishes already have – schools, community networks, committed parishioners etc. – information can flow, helping those in need and protecting those who are young.

'That is what we did. We linked the secondary school with those dedicated to the issue in Crosscare. They used a very successful DVD, *Find the Balance, Dare to Dream*. We linked the issue to our confirmation programme by including a module on drug awareness, led by our parish catechist. We intend to use our wider community network to spread the information to everyone in a form that they can keep and draw upon if they are ever touched by this issue. There are many demands on our time but the good news is that so much is already at hand' (Fr Michael Shortall, Rathcoole/Saggart parish).



CASE STUDIES

Each pilot project had a different reason for implementing the programme; however, they all had one common aim: they were aware that there is a problem nationwide with drugs and alcohol and wished to play a part in reducing the problems for their local communities by reaching out in a Christian way. Below are a number of case studies that show the process of how parishes got involved and what responses and events they have been involved in by sharing their own experiences of the project.

MOONCOIN AND TEMPLEORUM PARISH DRUGS INITIATIVE

Vision: We wish to create a Christian community working together in the service of one another for the health and well-being of each individual and our community, while also developing a healthy awareness of substance use and misuse. We also wish to equip confirmation children with the education and skills to help them in making the right choices for a healthy life using the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

'When we first signed up to the IBDI we were two parishes working together, looking for ways to answer the needs of young people, especially the confirmation year age group. We wished to make the Sacrament of Confirmation real and valued in their lives, so that it would make an impact on their everyday lives, as well as the life choices they make. The most urgent need was for substance use education and life skills that could link in well with the SPHE Programme.

'Therefore, we decided to form a committee that managed the provision of a peer drug education programme in two bordering parishes. This programme was devised from an award-winning peer education programme to meet the needs of a parish community. At the outset, this was a partnership approach, which we believe was an important part of its success. The programme was facilitated by the parish, the HSE Education Officer and Ossory Youth leaders. On a larger scale, we had support from the Church, the parish community, adolescent and confirmation youths, local schools, parents and senior citizens.

The partnership approach is excellent, absolutely excellent – because it has become a ripple effect in our community.

'Our first action was to train a core group of adults over the first year. They were trained in a variety of leadership skills with the HSE, such as facilitation, communication, group work and drug awareness. These leaders then provided support to Ossory Youth leaders in the training of young people from the parish community between the ages of fifteen and seventeen. When this group had been trained, they spent three weeks putting together a programme for the confirmation children.

They loved it. It was fun as well as educational, the peer educators grew in stature and confidence, and they all really enjoyed it.

'Without doubt, professional workers from the HSE and Ossory Youth lead people to look at their own habits, such as alcohol consumption, alongside changing their perceptions and attitudes.

They break down barriers between parents and young people. Parents are no longer afraid of the word 'drug' and confirmation kids can now communicate with their parents also.

'The other part of the confirmation programme was faith development; this involved linking the gifts of the Holy Spirit with the correct and healthy life choices. With making healthy life choices you are giving glory to God while looking after oneself.

'It has a knock-on effect on the Church; children come to Mass every week now; they take part in certain aspects of the Mass like readings and prayers. This allows them to take ownership of their lives and ownership of their faith. They are now familiar with the church, they walk into the church with confidence, and with this new confidence they partake in the Mass and take leadership in the church through readings etc. This then allows them to take leadership outside of the church.

'Our church is practically full at Saturday night Mass, with confirmation kids, communion kids and the majority of parents. It is having a positive psychological effect on us – our parish is alive. There are so many young people and young parents, all coming together. They are also getting to know each other and building friendships through faith. Another aspect of our confirmation programme is our Faith Friends. Each young person writes a profile of themselves, which is brought to the Young at Heart senior citizen group. The Young at Heart group each pick a name out of a hat. The elder person then makes a commitment to pray for the young person, which helps strengthen the community. This has also taken away fears older people have of meeting young people gathered on streets. Young people have also become more comfortable in the company of the elderly. Everyone wants to see this success and excitement – the church full, teeming with young people and young parents. The elderly are so happy and thrilled to see young people reading and singing at Mass.

The Spirit is stirring within the Church and so the community will do anything to support the programme. The Jesuits were right: if you get the children you will get the parents.

'We are always looking for ways to improve the programme, should a new need arise. We believe it is not just the confirmation parents who need education and training, so this year we are offering a number of weeks' training to all parents. The subjects being covered are as follows: keeping lines of communication open, ages and stages, and mental health and young people. We are also planning new elements for 2009, including expression through art, art competitions and gardening.

'With drug prevention and a healthy community as an aim, we must remember there are various ways to give the same message. The impact we aim for is a healthier community with healthier young people and families, alongside a healthier, faith-based community. We have planned from the outset that from next year this programme will be self-sufficient, with enough people in the community trained to a high standard, who can sustain the programme without the help of the HSE and Ossory Youth.

It is important to create links with other groups and this allows support for each other. I am sure a manual explaining the stepping stones in relation to running this programme would be very helpful for parishes'.

Before I started the course I didn't know anything about the effects of drugs … this course has helped me say no to drugs. It also taught me to value my life, and I don't ever want to destroy it.

'Faith is the way of holding on to what we hope for, being certain of what we cannot see.' (Hebrews 11:1)

HSE EDUCATIONAL OFFICER:

'The main aim of the project's participants is to eventually be able to provide accurate and balanced drug information to both adults and young people, which empowers the communities. The model [training programmes that enabled young people and adults, from two parishes, to become peer educators] created a knowledge base of drug issues in the communities. The programme also created awareness that a group of adults and young people could deliver drug information sessions to various groups.

'The most important facet of these programmes is sustainability. Keeping drug information and prevention programmes running over a period of years – whilst continuing to provide good quality drug information – is essential to it being judged a success. But in order to continue, the programmes need to retain the backing and enthusiasm of the stakeholders (community, HSE, community-based drugs initiatives, the Church).

'Often the concept of "drug prevention" is taken as meaning that drugs will be totally eradicated through education, legislation and the enforcement of laws. However, the reduction of the harm that drugs can cause to individuals and communities is possibly a more realistic and achievable goal. Using this latter concept of drug prevention as a yardstick, the Parish Peer Drug Education Programme has, through education and raising awareness, provided the communities of Mooncoin and Piltown with several people who now have substantial knowledge of drug issues and treatment options. This information will be organically passed onto the wider community when required.'

CHURCH OF OUR LADY, BLESSINGTON

'Our Lady of Mercy Parish in Blessington has been involved with the Parish Drugs Awareness Initiative since March 2007. At that time the parish committee had already set up a service in the town for the local youth in response to a growing concern regarding the emergence of social problems in the area, for example, anti-social behaviour and underage drinking. The service that was set up was named d-Caf, and is situated in the local community hall. The d-Caf is a place where the local young people can engage in various activities and interact with the local volunteers.

'After the establishment of d-Caf, the local volunteers linked in with the Parish Drugs Awareness Initiative worker and decided that they needed to be properly informed around issues concerning drugs and alcohol. In January 2008, twenty-two members of the community received drugs awareness training from a Drugs Educational Training Officer from the East Coast Regional Drugs Task Force. When asked what she gained from the training day, Betty Murphy said:

> *Ever since the training day, I no longer see drugs, or the problems in the town that are related to drugs, as being the overwhelming, frightening problems that I used to think they were. It has settled my fears. So many people turned up for the training, and it was great to realise that others in the community were interested in responding to the issue. It's also great to know that we have the IBDI, DAP and Drugs Task Force there to support us. After that training day, we felt confident that we could do something to help.*

'The Blessington parish felt that there was a need, not only for the older teenagers, but also for those who were approaching confirmation, to be met with regards to making responsible and informed choices about alcohol. In May and June of this year, the children and parents of the local primary school took part in training. The Parish Drugs Awareness Initiative worker arranged for the d-Caf volunteers to receive training from the National Youth Council Ireland (NYCI), which would equip them with some further skills to work with at-risk teenagers who attend d-Caf. Betty Murphy is, at present, setting up a core group to specifically address issues relating to drugs and alcohol in the community. When this task is complete, the next step for Blessington parish is to hold a drugs and alcohol awareness night for the wider community.'

CLICKS (COMMUNITY LINKS IN CASTLEBELLINGHAM, KILSARAN AND STABANNON DRUGS INITIATIVE)

Mission Statement: CLICKS is a group of local people whose purpose is to help raise awareness and inform all sectors of the community, especially the youth, of the dangers associated with drugs, alcohol and other kinds of addiction.

'We were invited by the national coordinator to form a group in Kilsaran parish, which would look at the area of drugs and alcohol and discuss what might be done to address these issues. A group was readily formed because of the perceived level of alcohol abuse and the probable use of illegal substances. We drew together a number of key people who had an interest in working on the issues and, under the direction of the IBDI coordinator, began to think about the whole area of drug/alcohol abuse and what a parish might do about it.

'Having conducted an assessment of the local situation, we developed an awareness of the abuse of alcohol in the area, a certain amount of underage drinking and the growing availability and use of illegal substances, especially hash and cocaine. Because of the nature of addiction and the fact that many of the substances in question were illegal, we realised the difficulties in quantifying the problem, but knew it existed.

'Not having an understanding of addiction or the abuse of substances, most of the group felt concerned about and perhaps frustrated at what needed to be done. The group set about identifying some of the needs, how it might meet those needs, gave itself a name and came up with a mission statement. On reflection, it might have been useful to have guidelines or a manual to work with as the group went through that process. It proved to be quite arduous on the one hand, but on the other hand it was a very important learning process. It was also important to recognise that, because of the changing nature of the issues, a certain amount of flexibility was needed. We also recognised the importance of practicality in terms of what a parish group could do in accordance with good practice and the use of support already in place in the wider community.

'Eventually the name CLICKS was chosen – Community Links in Castlebellingham, Kilsaran and Stabannon. The need to build up the community and help provide alternative gathering places to licensed premises was a priority. During this early period the parish was given a proposal by a group of individuals in the Stabannon area to renovate and upgrade the old school hall. The idea was taken on board and they undertook the planning of the project and put it in place. That venue has been up and running since early 2007.

'The members of CLICKS became aware of the need for information, and so the group has been engaged in ongoing formation to raise its own awareness, skills and knowledge. Best practice suggests not to take anything on without the necessary skills and qualifications; in this way a parish group can act as a conduit for statutory and voluntary agencies and promote the dissemination of information. Work has been carried out in Kilsaran, thanks to FÁS, on the old school, which has now been restored. Activities taking place in this venue include: coffee mornings, a bridge club, a youth club and various meetings, including a new Community Alert group. Al-Anon also plan to hold a regular group in this venue.

'Some achievements to date have been:

- Production and distribution of information leaflets.
- Organising Parent to Parent programmes.
- Making the premises available for alternate activities.
- Ongoing training in addiction in collaboration with the HSE addiction service.
- Needs assessment survey conducted in the area.
- Ongoing training in related areas: suicide and brief intervention etc.
- Promotion of the project at a local level.
- Regular meetings to assess progress and engage in planning.
- Building links with the Regional Drugs Task Force (RDTF) at regional cluster group level.

'There is no doubt of the value of the IBDI training days in Clonliffe; sharing ideas, hopes and frustrations enabled the group to move forward with ideas from other groups. The work of the coordinator was invaluable in creating links for the ongoing formation of the group, giving realistic direction and support. From the list of achievements to date, it is fair to say that much has been done in a relatively short period – we have come a good distance, particularly in learning and raising awareness.

'I think a manual would have been of value in establishing early on what is best practise for the group. As well as this, a guide for the business side of things is always useful. Each new group is in need of direction and support and a manual would give a good outline plan from the outset. The best advice for any group engaging in such a project is to take it step by step and be realistic. See what resources the group has and what resources are available, for example, a manual, websites, a coordinator, outreach workers and other agencies.

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BLACKROCK AND HAGGARDSTOWN PARISH DRUGS INITIATIVE

'When our parish was chosen to participate in the pilot project, a number of parishioners were approached by the parish priest with a view to becoming involved. Having met the national coordinator of IBDI, a group of six people was formed, including parents, teachers and youth workers living in the parish. We were probably attracted by a common concern for our young people and their exposure to the culture of alcohol and drug misuse.

In the early stages, due to changes in personnel at both local and national level, the committee took some time to become active. In retrospect, we would devote more time at this stage to identifying our roles, shaping our ideas and clarifying our goals for the long- and short-term. We would do all this before inviting any external contributors.

'As we really did not know where to begin, we decided that our first concern should be to get a realistic picture of the situation in our parish. After several exploratory meetings, our committee began by surveying a wide range of groups in the parish concerning their experience of drug and alcohol abuse by young people. We also asked for suggestions as to what we, as a community, could do to address this issue. We had a very good response from local sporting and social organisations, as well as shopkeepers, publicans, doctors, pharmacists, Gardaí, the tidy towns committee and the community centre. At this stage, we benefited significantly from the experience of the new national coordinator, whose HSE and addiction working background proved invaluable. The coordinator supported us in making contacts with the local HSE addiction service and health promotion department, as well as the regional drugs task force and local community groups such as Turas Counselling Services and Peer Youth Education (PYE). It is very helpful and good practice to network with other groups that work in the area of addiction.

'When we collated the results of the survey, we felt this gave us a very useful basis on which to decide how we could be most effective. Our first activity was an information evening for parents, who were addressed by HSE personnel and a member of the Garda drugs squad. We advertised this with posters and by distributing leaflets through primary schools and after Masses. This was well attended and resulted in our setting up a five-week course to provide further information to a group of fifteen parents. This was facilitated by the HSE drugs education team and participants found it a very positive experience.

A member of our committee also attended training with the Drug Education Workers Forum on quality standards in drug education. This will be helpful in allowing our group to ensure best practice when considering education programmes in the future.

'A further course for parents is planned for the near future. We are currently working on producing a leaflet containing essential local contact numbers for support services in the area of drug and alcohol misuse. We sourced the information ourselves and used a design company to produce it, using the graphic already familiar from our posters. We intend to distribute this throughout the parish, where we hope it will be useful in emergencies and for people to access services they may require. We find it essential to meet at least once a month, as well as circulating information by e-mail.

'The parish is very useful in various ways. It gives the group an identity, as well as providing a way of disseminating information through the local primary schools and after Masses. We meet in the parochial house and the parish priest acts as a link to the group, until some other means can be established (for example, an e-mail address or website). We have also had the use of free photocopying facilities until we can obtain funds. Limited funding is available from the IBDI and the HSE. A bank account is necessary in order to access and administer these funds.

We have not experienced any resistance to or surprise at the fact that our group has become active in this area, and this may well be due to the fact that we are a parish organisation. We make extensive use of the local media to publicise our existence and activities. We give interviews to local papers and one member has been interviewed on local radio. All of this helps to raise awareness of the broader issue of drug abuse among the young and some of the efforts that are being made locally.

'One difficulty we have not yet overcome is how to target the local teenage population, a focus group where alcohol and drug abuse is concerned. The teenagers attend a variety of secondary schools in the nearby town and so far we have not found an effective way to connect with them as a group. There is a peer mentoring programme which operates in most of these secondary schools, and we are considering whether mentors from our parish could form a group to work in our area in the future.'

The positive reaction we have had so far, both at public meetings and informally, has given us the encouragement to keep going. The suggestions we receive give us a sense of direction and the hope is that we are trying to respond to local people's needs.

CAVAN DRUGS INITIATIVE (URNEY PARISH)

'We formed as part of the Irish Bishops' Drugs Initiative in 2007 at the request of Bishop Reilly, who wanted us to take part in a pilot project due to the size of our town. I brought together a good multi-disciplinary team consisting of primary teachers, secondary teachers, local juvenile Gardaí, a youth worker and a health worker, a council representative and a member of clergy. The committee felt it was good to be involved with this project. We agreed to take our time and set our aims and objectives for the first year. Our main aim was to enable our parish to become self-sufficient in dealing with the needs of the community in relation to drugs and alcohol. The need arose for more information on local support

services, so we developed a card that listed all the support and help available in relation to drugs. We sent it to every home, as well as to schools, colleges and the town churches. We distributed over two thousand cards and the response was excellent; people told the parish they had used them and thought they were great because you could keep them in your wallet.

'We also spoke about our project and addiction issues during all homilies over weekend Masses. Parishes should get involved; getting people to come together to address the situation and offer help can be tough at times, but we can only do our best. Our committee is excellent and we reach a large population of youth in the area. Our committee has undergone extensive training in the area of addiction, which has given us more insight into this issue. On looking at needs in our area, a few key points arose. The need for an increase in local counselling and support, especially after 5 p.m., and the need for support for young people affected by the problem of alcohol use and drugs awareness knowledge for parents in the town were noted. An information night was held for parents, which was attended by a speaker from the HSE, Cavan Drugs Awareness and the Gardaí.

'The group is in the process of planning the formation of an Alateen service, having been approached by a number of young people seeking support. Over the past year the group has been involved in capacity building and networking with other groups. A drug peer education group has been planned in partnership with the group Peer Youth Education, involving students from three local secondary schools. This should be of benefit to the town and the sixth class groups they will be mentoring. It has been very beneficial making contact with other services, which now act as a referral agency for the project locally. We have been lobbying for extra services in the town and are hopeful that additional services may come about with help. It is only through working together that we can make a difference.'

CARRICK-ON-SHANNON PARISH

'We undertook two projects during the life of the group. The first was to produce and distribute an information card about the resources/support available locally and nationally to give parents and young people a starting point. This meant they could make contact with professionals if they had questions or concerns about their children and drugs. We sourced funding to help with the cost of production and distribution of the cards. We then organised an evening where all groups, associations and clubs that are active in the community and would welcome young people could come together to promote their associations and encourage people to join. The groups went to a good deal of effort on the night, but our choice of holding the event over the Easter holidays meant that very few young people turned up. Each club was charged a fee to participate, as we were concerned about covering the cost of running the event. In the end, the surplus was sent to Trócaire.

'I believe most definitely that a guidebook or manual would have been helpful at the beginning. At many stages during my involvement I began to wonder what exactly I was doing and where the group should be going. A manual would definitely have given us a way to negotiate the crossroads we met!

'A piece of advice to other parishes starting off is be very clear about what you are doing and why. Keeping the group motivated and enthusiastic is vital. Pick your volunteers with care! Our downfall in the end was that the group disintegrated, with too few of us left to keep it going. However, we are continuing to support the IBDI where possible and other options and links are being considered at this time.'

Remember: If a parish wishes to receive support on how to form a response, there is a full step-by-step guideline manual available, as well as support from the Irish Bishops' Drugs Initiative.

BASIC RESPONSES ARE POSSIBLE

There are many activities a parish can implement without having to give too much time and involvement. Below is a sample of a few that may be worth considering:

- Support services or helpline posters can be displayed in the parish church or parish buildings (posters and information are available from Crosscare's Drug & Alcohol Programme by contacting a coordinator or parish outreach worker).
- Clergy can collate accurate information on drugs and alcohol and speak in church or around the parish (information available from www.drugs.ie, your local HSE Addiction Service or Regional Drugs Task Forces).
- Through contacts in local schools, the use of the SPHE Programme in relation to the Walk Tall Programme (drug/alcohol prevention programme) in primary schools can be promoted (support is available to schools for implementing this programme).
- Clergy or the Pastoral Council can allow drug and alcohol self-help groups to use the parish premises (these may include AA, NA, GA or family support groups). Drugs awareness nights or meetings with addiction support workers available to the community can also be facilitated .
- Information nights for the parish community regarding services and training options that are available locally and regionally can be promoted.

These objectives may be initiated by implementing some of the following methods or contacting the Irish Bishops' Drugs Initiative for support:

- Clergy or pastoral councils can respond to the issues of drugs and their harms and set a plan to respond at a parish level.
- A representative of the parish can take a leadership role by forming a group to examine drug and alcohol issues locally.
- The parish may decide to form a formal project to respond or seek support in order to formulate a project, with help from a coordinator or parish outreach worker.

Note: For support and information on formulating a parish response, please contact the Irish Bishops' Drugs Initiative.

LEVELS OF ACTIVITIES WITHIN PARISHES

As a means of measuring the responses and activities of the parishes involved in the pilots, it was important to draft different levels of activity for parishes to work from. Therefore, we have listed activities below that can be employed by parishes relating to each level. The use of this three-fold development model, as outlined below, is to indicate and manage the level of engagement of a parish.

Level 1: Pre-development work – establishment of committee, training, name for the group, short-term work plan, including production of an information leaflet and one parish activity.

Level 2: Establishment of a medium-term programme of activity, including building projects (where appropriate), on-going parish events-based programmes, including transition year interventions, as well as confirmation- and communion-based activities. The establishment of relationships with existing services and a competent resource base for the referral of families and/or young people to appropriate services as required.

Level 3: Established (and reviewed) calendar of work, along with an evaluation of impact at parish and local level. Development of parish-based services to complement statutory, community and voluntary services, for example, family support, spiritual guidance, parish-based crisis response and youth preventative services, including youth clubs and cafés etc. Intervention with local clubs/groups is also important, so that they are more drug/alcohol aware at supply, treatment and prevention levels.

SACRAMENT OF CONFIRMATION – AN OPPORTUNITY TO RESPOND

A confirmation programme compiled by the Irish Bishops' Drugs Initiative and Crosscare's Drug & Alcohol Programme trains members of the parish (preferably peer led) to become trainers themselves. They, in turn, will then train the sixth class students who are working towards the Sacrament of Confirmation in their parish community.

Aim: To equip young people with new skills that may better empower them in their decision-making and the choices they may have to make over the difficult time of change during their transition to secondary school. It is hoped the skills learned will be linked with the gifts and fruits of the Holy Spirit, especially in relation to wisdom and knowledge, as well as issues like self-control and finding joy and peace without substances. We will work in an interactive way, which involves role plays and exercises that will explore peer behaviours. We will work towards encouraging young people to make a commitment to refrain from substances until they feel mature enough to make a decision.



There are two programmes available: Programme A entails six one-hour sessions, and Programme B entails four one-hour sessions. Both courses will always try to complement the Walk Tall Programme in primary schools. This programme has proved very positive for all involved in the parish community.

PROGRAMME CONTENT

Substance Awareness: alcohol/smoking and other age-appropriate drugs. Knowledge of self and of substances.

Bulding Self-Esteem: interactive games, worksheets, natural highs – joy and happiness.

Growth and Attitudes: trust/attitudes.

Building Positive Relationships: friendship/building relationships.

Communication Skills: saying no to both direct and indirect peer pressure.

Assertiveness: equipping young people with the skill of avoidance, through a new confidence in communication taught through role play.

Spiritual and Faith Development: making new choices, linking gifts and fruits of the Holy Spirit, influences (family and social), decision-making (self-control), self-worth, goals, consequences of choices (good and bad).

Future Dreams and Expectations: lifeline/goals.

BEST PRACTICE – WHAT WORKS

- It only takes one or two individuals with vision and leadership qualities to form a response.
- It can be valued and very important for parishes to respond, even if only in a small manner.
- It is important to consider people with experience in the area of addiction or youth to be members of committees, in order for the committee not to feel overwhelmed by drug issues.
- It is important to have regular meetings – at least once a month in order to keep momentum going.
- It is important to have roles and functions for committee members. Keeping the group motiveted assures more success.
- It is worth considering forming subgroups to address certain issues, particularly if certain committee members wish to have an increased response or can give more personal time to the project.
- It has proven more beneficial to have a separate group from the parish council due to their work demands. However, maintain continued links with parish councils and clergy.
- Remember that it is helpful to have youth represented on committees to help address their views.
- Parishes can consider allowing outside, related groups and drug prevention events to happen in parish buildings, i.e. AA, NA or family support groups.
- Links to primary schools can be positive in allowing further education programmes to complement the Walk Tall Programme to be implemented, i.e. parent programmes or out of school programmes.
- Networking with other service providers, both statutory and community, is very important to allow for resources such as training, partnerships, approaches etc. and not to reinvent services already in existence.
- Taking time at the project formation level has proved more beneficial. Looking at strategic planning, i.e. aims, objectives and outcomes, is important in order to sustain a long-term project.
- Promote the parish project in the community through newsletters, radio and local print media.

Remember points that may hinder the group:

- Poor formation of a committee, without key people with knowledge/experience, may lead to feelings of being overwhelmed regarding the subject of substance use and prevention.
- Over-reliance on local clergy can lead to poor empowerment of a committee and the project's long-term sustainability if clergy happen to move to another parish.
- Acknowledge differences of opinions and personalities in committees (we are human); conflicts can lead to break-up of committee or loss of key members.
- Lack of commitment to the project – a few same faces left to do all tasks can affect the project.
- Increased expectations can lead to feelings of failure if things are not successful.
- Lack of funding or resources for training or poor recognition of the project.
- Running too many events leading to burn-out of volunteers.
- Lack of support for projects.

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FORMING A PARISH RESPONSE

Note: Please contact the Irish Bishops' Drugs Initiative to get information, support and register your parish for the step-by-step handbook for parishes on alcohol/drug issues.

The parish's response can begin simply with an individual in some small manner, or by forming a group to outline an approach. If the latter is being considered, it is important to explore some of the following options.

DRUGS POLICY

It is important that all organisations have thought about and held discussions with parish representatives and other interested parties on forming a parish policy. Some suggestions are included in the step-by-step handook and help is available by contacting the IBDI Coordinator or Parish Outreach staff.

REGIONAL AND NATIONAL SUPPORT

A full list of support and help available locally and nationally is available in the handbook. As this may change over time, an update is available on www.drugs.ie, which is managed by the Crosscare Drugs & Alcohol Programme, in partnership with the HSE.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are a result of the feedback from pilot parishes and the observations of the staff involved in supporting the projects.

- Promote the fact that everyone can play a part in drug prevention in the parish community.
- Encourage all parishes to formulate a response to drug prevention, beginning at Level One (setting up a small core group – see next point).
- Form a small core group specifically dedicated to drug prevention and awareness, which should include individuals with appropriate skills in this area.
- It is vital for parishes to work in partnership with all other service providers. A first step is to identify existing available resources.
- Get training for the core group from the service providers.
- Carry out a needs assessment within the parish community.
- Ensure that the schools in the parish are able to fulfill their role in prevention through the SPHE Programme and their substance use policy.
- Use opportunities such as confirmation preparation to offer support and training for parents – again availing of other service providers as trainers.
- Promote the fact that faith can play an integral part as a protective factor in drug prevention.
- Use existing parish and diocesan structures to raise awareness and promote prevention, e.g. parish halls, liturgy, parish events.
- Promote the use of Drug Peer Education in Community setting as a good model.
- Promote awareness of relevant websites such as www.catholicbishops.ie and www.drugs.ie
- It is important for communities to have a strategic plan in place to help sustain a long-term response.
- Parish groups can encourage the community to mobilise others to assist in their efforts, e.g. local media, Gardaí, youth groups, sports organisations, drug services and local governments.



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APPENDIX 1

Below is a full index of the contents of the full manual, which is available on request from the Irish Bishops' Drugs Initiative. Contact details can be found on the back cover of this booklet.

INDEX FOR THE FULL MANUAL

UNDERSTANDING DRUG ISSUES

What is a Drug?
Alcohol and Society
Effects of Alcohol
Drug use in Society
Types of Drugs
Why Young Pople use Drugs
Signs of Drug Use
What is Addiction/Dependency?
Signs of Addiction
Talking to a Person using Drugs
Information for Parents on Talking to Young People about Drugs
Information for Parents that Believe their Child is Using Drugs
What to do in Case of Emergency
Drug Use and the Law

PREVENTION

What is Drug Prevention?
What Works?
Best Practice in Drug Prevention
How can the Parish Respond to Prevention of Drug/Alcohol Misuse?
Risk Factors to Drug Use
Protective Factors

PLANNING A PARISH RESPONSE

How to Plan a Parish Response
How to Respond
How to Form a Parish Drugs Initiative

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How to Form a Committee
Roles and Functions of a Committee

NEEDS ASSESSMENT
What, Why, Who, How?
Step-by-Step Guide on How to Implement a Needs Assessment

HOW AND WHY TO IMPLEMENT A STRATEGIC PROJECT PLAN
Vision and Aims
Objectives and Goals
Indicators and Outcomes
Evaluation of Project: When, Why, Where, Ways?
Step-by-Step Guide on Evaluating a Parish Project

STAGES OF DEVELOPMENT
Levels of Activity 1–3
Sample of Level 1 Activity
Sample of Level 2 Activity
Sample of Level 3 Activity
Implementing these Activities

CASE STUDIES OF PILOT PARISH PROJECTS

DRUGS/ALCOHOL POLICY
Suggested Examples
Questions to Consider

DRUG INFORMATION
What Drugs Look Like
General Information about Drugs

DIRECTORY OF NATIONWIDE SUPPORT SERVICES
Nationwide Support
Local Support

APPENDIX 2

EVENTS THAT PARISHES MAY CONSIDER RUNNING

- Drugs services information night
- Drugs Awareness Programme for parents in community – universal programmes
- Drugs Awareness Programme for young people to complement SPHE
- Promote SPHE Programme implementation in local school (Walk Tall Programme)
- Community peer education training
- Organise a gathering of social organisations for youth to promote involvement in new activities as alternatives to drugs and alcohol
- Community leadership skills in drug education
- Promote local addiction support in parish community, i.e. AA, NA, GA, Al-Anon and family support groups
- Display posters of local services
- Promote the website www.drugs.ie
- Organise youth clubs or youth support and services
- Distribute local support addresses and helpline numbers on leaflets
- Discuss addiction issues through liturgy
- Art competitions on the topic of drugs/alcohol
- Debating on drugs topics
- Poetry and short story competitions on drugs and joys of not using drugs
- Drama on a topic of drug/alcohol-related issues
- Promote the establishment of youth activities as alternatives to drug/alcohol use
- Promote parish activities that may engage, educate and empower local parents
- Network with other agencies to promote the use of targeted programmes for 'at risk' groups within the parish community
- Formulate a parish drug/alcohol policy
- Encourage and promote family support
- Promote parish suicide awareness training, i.e ASIST (Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training)
- Promote local school to implement an inclusive drug/alcohol policy
- Formulate a resource list of all drug/alcohol support in order to act as a referral agency
- Promote the use of a confirmation programme on drugs and alcohol
- Clergy can raise issues through liturgy
- Organise drug/alcohol information stands in parish communities on specific occasions
- Prayer or support through prayer groups or prayer services for those affected and their families.

For information and support on organising any of the events mentioned above within a parish, please register or contact John Taaffe, National Coordinator, Irish Bishops' Drugs Initiative at ibdi@iecon.ie



APPENDIX 3

EXAMPLE OF HOW A PARISH RESPONDED – JADD AND TRP

'I can put my hand on my heart and honestly say that this project [JADD] would not be where it is today without all of the help and support it has received from Fr Val' (Tommy Gilson, Director, JADD).

This example highlights just how important and effective the involvement and support of the local church, together with concerned members of the community, can be in responding to local needs regarding drug-related problems. What are now two very successful drug projects, Jobstown Assisting Drug Dependency (JADD) and Tallaght Rehabilitation Project (TRP), essentially began with concerned members of the community knocking on the door of the local parish priest. Initially, the concerned residents ran the JADD treatment programme from their homes, with the support services of a local GP and chemist, beginning with five clients. In an attempt to respond to the need for proper drug services and premises in the community, concerned members gained the support of the Eastern Health Board (EHB), who provided a doctor and staff to run a methadone clinic in the local area. The problem was that there were no local premises available for the clinic to work from. The parish priest was approached by a group of community members who expressed the community's need for a premises, and he immediately offered the use of the parish pastoral centre. The parish priest was also instrumental in establishing a crèche facility for those attending the programme who were parents of young children.

Through the full cooperation and genuine concern of the parish priest, the loft of the local church was converted to provide facilities for a drug rehabilitation programme for individuals living in the area. This programme included counselling, personal development, computer skills and other activities.

'It was amazing how the community came together to support the project; local residents offered their time to work shifts in the pastoral centre in order to support those who were undergoing rehabilitation' (Tommy Gilson, Director, JADD).

In early 1997, the Tallaght Drugs Task Force was set up and JADD submitted a funding proposal to build a drop-in centre. It is part of JADD's ethos to provide a complete drug treatment, including educational and personal development free of charge to the greater community. Other services include family support, outreach work and counselling. This achievement was partly due to the strong relationship that Fr Val shared with both those suffering from addiction and

those living in the wider community. One key element of the JADD project is its emphasis on caring for and addressing the special needs of the children of those who have suffered from substance addiction. JADD runs a children's self-esteem programme. JADD's director, Tommy Gilson, explains that this is an area that needs to be properly addressed if drug prevention is to be really successful.

As well as the development of the JADD project, another key individual involved in the early development of the project expanded the project in another direction, which moved premises to Kiltalown House. Kiltalown House is a beautiful restored house set at the foot of the Dublin Mountains. The project is now known as the TRP. The TRP was established in 1997 through a Tallaght Drugs Task Force initiative in response to the need for a dedicated rehabilitation project for the Tallaght area. The day programme commenced in February 2000 and is now entering its ninth year of operation.

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