

DLR -

Drug and Alcohol Task Force

Operational procedures

The DLR - DATF operates in accordance with the relevant sections 1 - VI of the 2011 Handbook, particularly pages 14-19, and the 2014 Report on the Review of Drugs Task Forces, particularly recommendations 10 and 11.

Changes in membership necessitated by the 2014 Report, (not already in place) will take effect following the DATF's 2015 AGM, which will take place sometime between May - September, 2015)

Media Protocol

If any Task Force member is contacted directly by a member of the media to comment on the views of the Task Force, the concerned party should be referred to the Task Force Chairperson or Co-ordinator.

- The Chairperson, as an independent representative of the DTF, should deal with any contentious issues that may arise in this regard.
- The Chairperson or Coordinator should consult with the relevant Task Force members in relation to such media queries.

Operational Guidelines

It is best practice that rules for the operation of Drugs Task Force meetings and sub-committee/working group meetings, outlining requirements around attendance and decision-making should also be agreed, in accordance with normal procedures and outlined in each Drugs Task Force's agreed Operational Procedures.

DTFs should have appropriate operational guidelines in place to support their work. These Guidelines should include the following:

- Meetings of the DTF will be held at least once a month;
- A quorum for meetings will be one third of the membership of the DTF;
- A special meeting of the DTF may be called at the request of a quorum of the members;
- Generally, decisions of the DTF will be taken by consensus;
- Where a consensus cannot be achieved, a vote will be taken;
- The Chair shall have the casting vote in the case of a split vote;
- Decisions will be recorded as decisions of the DTF and individual positions should be noted.

DTF Sub-Committees

While it will be a matter for each DTF to determine its precise structures/working arrangements, it is envisaged that it may wish to establish a number of sub-committees to progress its work and support the Task Forces in the implementation of its strategy. These may be set up on a thematic and/or geographic basis, this being a matter for the

DTF to determine having regard to local circumstances. Thematic sub-groups based around the pillars of the NDS work better than geographic sub-groups.

In relation to Sub-Groups:

- They should report back to their Task Forces and are not decision making bodies unless specifically mandated by the Task Force to be so;
- The chairperson of the sub-group should be a member of the Task Force but sub-groups may co-opt appropriate outside members as they see fit to assist in their work;
- All Sectors (where appropriate) Community, Public, Statutory and Voluntary, should be represented; and
- They should have agreed Terms of Reference.

SECTION II

Composition of Drug Task Forces

Membership of the DTFs

Membership must include Community representatives, Voluntary representatives and key Statutory Agencies. Each DTF should be chaired by an independent chairperson and should include representation from the following sectors/agencies:

- Community Sector
- Voluntary Sector
- Public Representatives
- Department of Education and Skills/VEC
- FÁS
- Garda Síochána
- Health Service Executive
- Local Authorities
- Probation Service
- Revenue Commissioners (Customs & Excise Division)
- Department of Social Protection
- Area Based Leader Partnership Companies/Community Development projects
- City/County Development Boards
- Service Users
- Communities of Interest

Task Forces may wish to consider seeking representation (at Task Force or Sub Group level) from other sources in light of their own needs and the needs of the communities they serve.

Community Sector

Community representatives, to a maximum of six, should be nominated to each Drugs Task Force following extensive consultation among local community groups and community fora. Nominations for representatives should be based on the following criteria:

- Having an appropriate and adequate geographic spread of representation for the area;
- Giving priority to groups with a strong track record in community development;

- Nominating individuals who have the relevant knowledge and experience of the drugs issue necessary to play a full and productive role on the Drugs Task Force; and
- Nominating representatives who have the active support of the communities they represent.

These criteria continue to apply when replacing community representatives for any reason, e.g. at the end of their term, resignations, etc.

Voluntary Sector

Voluntary representatives are nominated as set out in Section IV (Pg. 28). Criteria for nomination will include:

- Giving priority to groups with a strong track record in drug treatment, rehabilitation or prevention and who are working in the area;
- Nominating individuals who have the relevant knowledge and experience of the drugs issue necessary to play a full and productive role on the Drugs Task Force; and
- Recognising the need for representatives to report to the voluntary drug sector as a whole rather than solely to their own voluntary agency.

Statutory Agencies

Departments/Agencies, in nominating their representatives, are required to take account of the need to nominate persons who are at a sufficiently senior level, or have access to people in their organisation who are in a position to influence policy. Departments/Agencies are also required to ensure that their representatives' work with the Task Forces is seen as part of their core duties and that they have the necessary time available to them to enable them to undertake their role effectively (see Section III Pg. 22). To ensure a strong and active role by the statutory sector, it is important that statutory representatives have proper organisational supports and the necessary back-up arrangements.

Elected Representatives

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

Service Users

It is important that the views of service users are represented on the Drugs Task Forces. They have a unique perspective on the policies/services being developed. The active participation by service users at Drugs Task Force or Sub Group level is to be encouraged and facilitated to add to the knowledge base of the Drugs Task Forces and

help to focus on practical actions of direct benefit to those for whom the services are being provided.

To facilitate such participation, it will be necessary to develop service users fora, building on the work by DTF projects and service providers around their own service user participation structures, from which representatives can be nominated to the DTF. Each Drugs Task Forces should endeavour to establish a forum for its area/region, making it a key priority for development workers to develop and support such a forum in each Task Force area. Other forms of representation for the needs of service users should be in place where such fora have not yet been established.

Communities of interest

The 'communities of interest' involved in any initiative can vary, depending on the issue being addressed and to the extent to which it impacts on them. It will be a matter for each DTF to agree locally or regionally how groups representing communities of interest will participate in the work. The remit of organisations from the voluntary and community sectors, already represented, is to address the extent to which the problems involving these client groups impact on the area.

LDTFs & RDTFs

In areas where Regional Drugs Task Forces & Local Drugs Task Forces co-exist it is important that there is ongoing co-operation and co-ordination and close links maintained.

City/County Development Boards

Similarly, the City/County Development Boards, who are responsible for developing a co-ordinated strategy for the social, economic and cultural development of their areas, may also be invited to participate in the work of the DTFs. This participation could be through the Social Inclusion Measures Groups, which operate under their aegis, through the Directors of Community & Enterprise.

Duration of Appointment/Review of Representation

There are no formal guidelines regarding the term of office of appointees to Drugs Task Forces. Generally, their tenure should be such as to ensure continuity and consistency in the approach of the Drugs Task Force in responding to the drug problem in its area (see Section IV Pg. 28).

In this regard, statutory representatives continue to be nominated to the Drugs Task Forces by their agencies, having regard to those agencies' responsibilities towards the initiative as outlined in Section III (Pg. 22).

Drugs Task Forces are required to ensure that appropriate procedures are in place to assist them with the election of the Chairperson and the appointment of members to the Task Force. A regular review of representation will take place. Rules for attendance at Drugs Task Force meetings and sub-committee/working group meetings, and for decision-making and confidentiality of proceedings, should also be

agreed, in accordance with normal procedures. Drugs Task Force members should sign a commitment to abide by these rules.

Recommendation 10

In the interests of good governance, Drug and Alcohol Task Forces should adopt a policy which sets out procedures for inviting nominations on the selection of board members. This policy should comply with the following provisions:

- With the exception of elected members, the term of office of members of the DATFs, including the Chairperson, shall be limited to three years;
- With the exception of elected members, members may be appointed for two consecutive terms and a third term after a break of three years;
- Staff members of a DATF, whether employed by the DATF or another body, may attend Task Force meetings in an official capacity but shall not be eligible to be voting members of the Task Force;
- Staff members of a DATF, whether employed by the DATF or another body shall not be members of the boards of community and voluntary organisations funded by the Task Force;
- Active community involvement in DATFs should be encouraged through capacity building initiatives.
- Initiatives or proposals that are agreed by sub-committees of the Task Force shall not be implemented unless approved by the Task Force;
- Members of DATFs shall declare any conflict of interest and shall not participate in any deliberations where such a conflict arises.

Recommendation 11

Local members of the Oireachtas and members of relevant Local Authorities should have automatic entitlement to become members of DATF and should be notified of

this when elected, and given a specific time frame to take up their membership. An upper limit of 5 seats on the Task Force should be applied (2 for members of the Oireachtas and 3 members of the local authority). These seats should be filled on an agreed rotational basis by the relevant local authorities and by local members of the Oireachtas.