

Public participation in effective development of a regional drug strategy: experiences from the South East Region of Ireland



Waterford Institute of Technology
INSTITIÚID TEICNEOLAÍOCHTA PHORT LÁIRGE



Michelle Foley,
Mary Reidy, John Wells

‘Reducing harm, supporting recovery: a health-led response to drug and alcohol use in Ireland 2017-2025’, was launched in July 2017.



Drug and alcohol task forces (DATFs)



Those working in drug and alcohol service, users of the service, their families and friends describe limited action and change at a regional level.



To develop a regional drug strategy aligned with the national drug strategy through public participation and engagement with service providers, users of the services and their families

Method: Six focus groups and five public consultation events were conducted across the South East Region adapted from the World Café Event Methodology (1)

Opportunities for people to listen

Clear purpose

Open and inclusive of all contributions

Explore questions of interest to participants

Seven Principals



Diverse viewpoints

Hosted in hospitable space

Forum to share collective discoveries

Three key questions were used to guide the discussions and related to emerging issues of substance misuse, current supports and resources and enablers for change at a regional level

How did we develop the regional strategy?

- **Data was thematic analysed and grouped under key objectives of the national drug strategy.**
- **A number of key goals were identified: 6 main priorities and 23 objectives, including educational targets, enhanced service provision, opportunities for rebuilding of social capital and initiatives for reducing drug related harm.**
- **Key priorities identified were discussed at length and agreed through negotiated consensus with 24 members of SERDATF.**
- **To ensure the effective implementation each objective was constructed using specific, measurable, achievable, resourced and time-limited (SMART) terminology.**
- **Each priority was subdivided to fit under a working sub-group to facilitate the action and ensure objectives could be met in a timely manner.**

- **The use of participatory decisions are more inclusive of different perspectives and values and were shown to identify emerging need in substance misuse and sustainable solutions for real improvement at a regional level.**
- **This method could be adopted in other DATF areas to improve the role out of national strategic objectives.**

