

*Implementing a gender dimension in drug
policy and practice: findings from the
Pompidou Group handbook for practitioners
and decision makers*

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**Lisbon Addictions 2022
Gender differences and gender identities in drug use,
addiction and interventions: why gender matters**

**IMPLEMENTING A GENDER
APPROACH IN DRUG POLICIES:
PREVENTION, TREATMENT
AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE**



Carine Mutatayi, Sarah Morton,
Nadia Robles Soto, Kristin I. Pálsdóttir
and Cristiana Vale Pires

A handbook for practitioners
and decision makers



"Those initiating, co-ordinating, leading and evaluating innovation and positive change are key to developing comprehensive gender-sensitive drug policy, and it is hoped that this handbook will support further transformation by providing useful frameworks, evidence and examples."

Mutatayi, C., Morton, S., Robles Soto, N., Pálsdóttir, K & Vale Pires, C. (2022) Implementing a Gender Approach in Drug Policies: Prevention, Treatment and Criminal Justice A handbook for practitioners and decision makers. Council of Europe: Strausborg. [1680a66835 \(coe.int\)](https://www.coe.int/t/t09/Drug_Policies/Implementing_a_Gender_Approach_in_Drug_Policies_Prevention_Treatment_and_Criminal_Justice_A_handbook_for_practitioners_and_decision_makers.pdf)

The Handbook...

- Seeks to promote gender sensitivity in drug responses as an essential leverage point to reduce health inequities.
- Enacting positive change - a challenging and protracted process - often requiring support, expertise, commitment and resources from a range of individuals, organisations and state structures.
- Outlines the international policy contexts to gender and substance use, as well as innovation and advancements within the fields of prevention, criminal justice, and treatment and intervention.

Dilemmas

- Definitions and understanding of gender and gendered impacts within society is ever evolving, as is our understanding of substance use initiation, trajectories and responses for individuals and within communities.
- International drug policy and responses have predominantly been tailored to men's perspectives, gender mainstreaming primarily seeks to better address the needs, rights and expectations of women and non-binary persons.

Challenges in developing drug policy

- Given state sovereignty and national specificities, there is no supreme standard to qualify the best drug policies.
- Gender mainstreaming is fundamentally aligned with the humanistic values supported by Western and European societies.
- Gender mainstreaming can be a long-term process rather than a result in itself - requires consideration of organisational structures, political will, and the economic and social context.
- The wider response to gender mainstreaming within policy will also inform actions and motivations towards positive change.

Ireland's National Drug Strategy – moving in the right direction?

Factors may have supported change

- Involvement and commitment to international projects including Pompidou Group and EMCDDA
- Active community sector.
- Community and state partnerships between academic institutions/academics.
- Wider social and political change.

Reducing Harm, Supporting Recovery

A health-led response to drug
and alcohol use in Ireland 2017-2025



Mid-Term Review of the national drugs strategy,
Reducing Harm, Supporting Recovery
and Strategic Priorities 2021-2025

Drugs Policy and Social Inclusion Unit
Dept of Health

October 2021

Roinn Sláinte
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

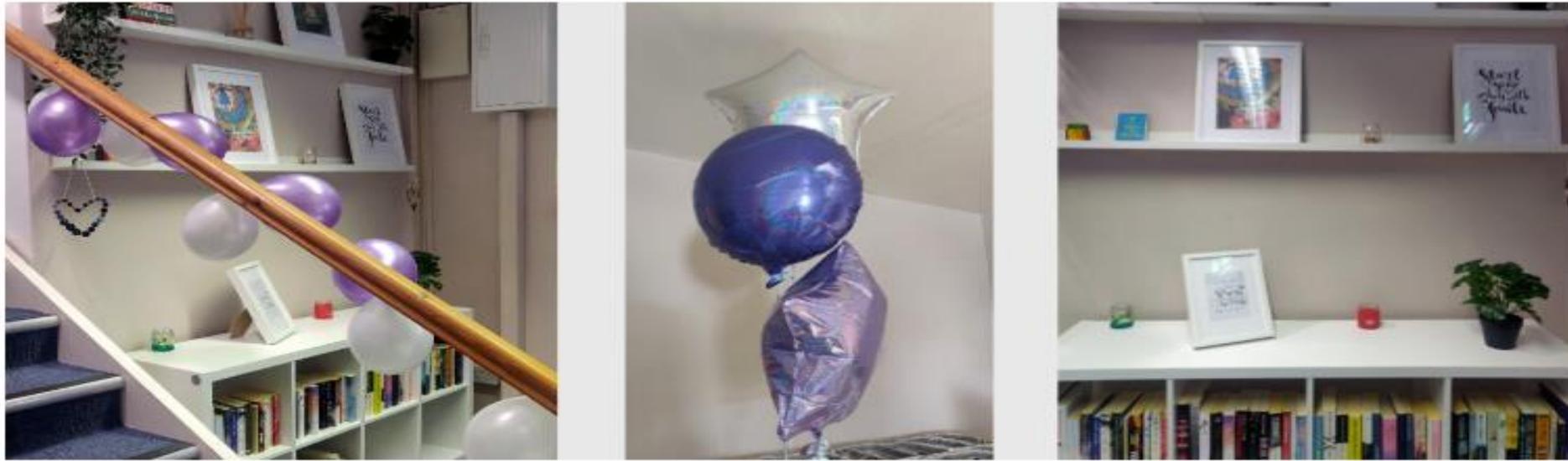


Pompidou Group
Groupe Pompidou



COUNCIL OF EUROPE

CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE



Inside Jane's Place, decorated for International Women's Day 2022

Key actions to date.....who drives innovation?

- Input into the interim review of the NDS
- Appointment of gender expertise to National Oversight Committee for NDS
- Wider expertise beyond gender
- Community and NGO Innovations – Jane's Place, Cuan Saor trauma informed responses, Parenting Under Pressure implementation.

Practitioners



- Organisations and practitioners are often at the forefront of recognising and responding to the gendered aspects of drug use.
- Ideally placed in not only developing interventions to meet the needs of women and non-binary persons but in initiating positive, gender-transformative change.

Criteria for innovation

- Provision of responses and interventions to women's substance use with a gender inclusion or gender sensitive focus.
- Gender-specific aspects – practical, theoretical.
- Evaluation and evidence base.
- Mechanisms by which gender inequalities and differences are addressed.



Cuan Saor Women's Refuge

- Originally developed as a community response to domestic violence.
- Excluding women from residential service provision if they are known to be actively using substances.
- Increased recognition of trauma histories, intergenerational issues of compromised parenting, substance use and domestic violence.
- Specific responses to women who were experiencing domestic violence and using substances, as well as further research and intervention development on trauma histories and responses.

Components

- Routine enquiry on substance use, the impact of substance use, consideration of triggers, harm reduction strategies and referrals and supports for detox, stabilization, treatment OST.
- Women who are actively using substances may be accommodated within the refuge.
- Supporting mothers to retain care of their children, obtain supervised access or obtain unsupervised access, with an aim of addressing aspects of compromised mothering.
- Training swaps between agencies, referral pathways between key agencies and in-reach.
- Routine enquiry on ACEs.



Addressing gender inequality

Specific practical, economic, educational and therapeutic supports.

Childcare is provided or childcare costs covered to ensure women can participate or engage with supports or interventions.

Advocate for positive change for women at inter-agency, community, and structural levels such as within child protection and welfare process and in relation to social welfare and housing entitlements.

Ongoing recognition of the intersectionality of substance use and domestic violence for women, - continuing work to integrate greater trauma informed responses to their work with women and children (Morton & Curran, 2019).



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