

**HSE media release:  
Wednesday October 26th**

### **Launch of new research into the role and benefits of education in drug rehabilitation**

Councillor Emer Costello (former Lord Mayor of Dublin) launched a research report into the role and benefits of education in drug rehabilitation and recovery from addiction on behalf of Róisín Shortall Minister of State at the Department of Health today (Wednesday 26th October).

The report '*The role of education in developing recovery capital in recovery from substance addiction*' was carried out by Martin Keane social research manager at the Health Research Board and is derived from an analysis of data from in-depth interviews with individuals who reported to be in recovery from substance addiction. The data was analysed using the recovery capital framework, which looks at social, physical, human and cultural outcomes.

20 people were interviewed – each had progressed through the HSE's Soilse rehabilitation programme. To assess their overall recovery, they were asked to talk about early school experiences, the family home, their communities, substance use and addiction, their engagement with treatment and recovery and experiences with education, employment and sustaining accommodation during their recovery.

Before getting involved in adult education through Soilse, most of the interviewees were early school leavers with modest formal educational achievements, little in the way of sustained employment and had experienced a history of conflict in the home. Whilst in recovery most have achieved third level degrees and diplomas.

Speaking about his experience of adult education from a social perspective, one interviewee said, 'Education introduced me to people that I would never have met before. It gave me a whole new circle of friends, a whole new lifestyle. If I wasn't in lectures, I was outside talking about lectures and talking to people in me (sic) class and socialising with them. It is a huge part of my recovery.'

Another interviewee did manage to acquire the leaving certificate but did not immediately progress to college education. He returned to adult education while in recovery from addiction to complete a degree in history and politics. He recalled his time as a mature student, "I went to college for a year and did an access course in UCD...I really struggled with it but it got progressively better. I graduated in 2005."

The study demonstrated the contribution that education can make in developing recovery capital – the sum of resources consisting of social, physical, human and cultural capital that is necessary to initiate and sustain recovery from addiction.

Speaking about his findings, Martin Keane said, "While official treatment programmes can play a vital role in halting addiction and promoting recovery, people also need to be able to transfer these benefits into day-to-day living. This study found that engaging with adult education while in recovery from substance addiction can open up opportunities for people that may provide them with rewards which they will not risk losing; legitimate income, sustainable housing, improved relations with family and a sense that they belong to a community.

The full report into 'the role of education in developing recovery capital in recovery from substance addiction' is available on <http://www.drugsandalcohol.ie/16140/>

**Notes to editor:**

**Rationale for the study**

This report is part of a wider study that explored how people recover from drug addiction. Both National and European drug policy is committed to promoting the role of education in addiction recovery (The Working Group on Drugs Rehabilitation; 2007, the EU Drugs Strategy 2005-2012 and the EU Drugs Action Plan 2009-2012). This report is a first step investigative attempt to explore what education means to people recovering from substance addiction and what added value it brings to their recovery. Ethical approval for the study was granted by the Ethics Committee in the Drug Treatment Board.

**The four dimensions to recovery capital are:**

1. **Social capital** = the sum of resources that each person has as a result of their relationships, support from and obligations to groups to which they belong
2. **Physical capital** = tangible assets such as property and money that may increase recovery options
3. **Human capital** = personal skills and education, positive health, aspirations and hopes; key aspects of human capital, and will help with some of the problem solving that is required on a recovery journey.
4. **Cultural capital**: Values, beliefs and attitudes that link the individual to social attachment and the ability to fit into dominant social behaviour.

**Soilse**

Soilse was piloted in 1992 and following evaluation was mainstreamed in 1994. One of Soilse's main objectives is: To break the spiral of addiction, dependency and social isolation and motivate recovering drug users to realise their potential.

Soilse has been dedicated to working with participants to improve their educational capital and assist them to enjoy the benefits of a full education. As part of this work, Soilse joined forces with the City of Dublin Vocational Educational Committee (CDVEC) in 2001 to establish a dedicated career guidance service. In recognition of their efforts to improve the educational opportunities for participants, in 2008 Soilse received the Dublin and region STAR award from Aontas, the Irish National Adult Learning Organisation, for both innovation in practice and teamwork in adult education. (2008). Further recognition was bestowed on Soilse in 2009 when the Soilse's Return to Learning project was selected as a finalist in the EBS/NALA Adult Continuing Education (ACE) Awards. The project supports recovering drug users in their progression to further education and many of the 20 people interviewed in the study covered in this report benefited from attending the RTL programme in Soilse. In 2010, Soilse's Career Guidance Service won the Dublin Regional STAR Award from Aontas and in 2011; Aontas again awarded Soilse the Dublin Regional STAR award for its Service User Involvement initiative.

More information on Soilse is available on

[http://www.hse.ie/eng/services/Find\\_a\\_Service/Addiction\\_Services/Soilse/](http://www.hse.ie/eng/services/Find_a_Service/Addiction_Services/Soilse/)