

7th of April 2025

Roderic O’Gorman, TD
Dáil Eireann
Kildare Street
Dublin 2.

PQ 13786/25

Dear Deputy O’Gorman,

To ask the Minister for Health if the drugs task forces in the Dublin area (details supplied) have been cutting funding for youth related prevention projects; if so, the reason for this; and if she will make a statement on the matter. -Roderic O’Gorman

The Health Service Executive has been requested to reply directly to you in the context of the above Parliamentary Question which you submitted to the Minister for Health for response. I have examined the matter and the following outlines the position of both the Blanchardstown Local Drugs and Alcohol Task Force and the Tallaght Drugs and Alcohol Task Force.

Blanchardstown: In 2018 the Blanchardstown local drug and alcohol task force set up a family support team. Over the seven years since then it has become apparent to us that there is a gap in service provision for 12- to 18-year-olds children who are either already using drugs or at high risk of drug use.

As a response to this gap which has also been identified in our local community-based research, the task force decided to offer the steps to cope program, an evidence-based intervention which targets the 12 to 18 year-old age group. Because the prospective clients of the Steps to Cope programme are young people who have been identified to us primarily through our work with their families, it is logical that the programme will be offered by a member of our own team. The programme is currently offered by an existing member of the team but demand is rapidly expanding because of the dearth of services for this client group.

As a requirement for this service offering, funding for a whole-time equivalent post which was recently located within Foroige has been repositioned within the family support team of the drugs task force.

Consequently there will be no overall reduction in services to young people who either use drugs or are at severe risk of using drugs in the D15 area. On the contrary, a new service for the for 12 to 18 year olds is being offered and will be expanded as soon as a person has been recruited to this post. The recruitment competition is at an advanced stage and we anticipate that the service will be fully staffed by May 2025.

Tallaght: A key responsibility of Local Drugs & Alcohol Task Forces is to review services and initiatives in the context of changing communities / emerging needs and trends. Tallaght Drugs and Alcohol Task

Force (TDATF) is committed to reviewing all the services and supports it funds on an ongoing basis in line with local and emerging needs, better value for money, proper governance and public policy. In 2024, TDATF reviewed its provision regarding education and prevention. There have been consistent requests from young people, students, parents, teachers, principals and schools for support and interventions in relation to drugs education, which the existing funded service provider were not able to respond to. On foot of this, the Task Force commissioned an independent report which examined options and made recommendations regarding education and prevention interventions in the school system. Subsequently, the findings of this report were reviewed by the Independent Finance Group of the Task Force which made recommendations to the Task Force. These recommendations were approved by the Task Force. The outcome of this decision is a reassignment of resources in education and prevention to meet local and emerging needs, to reach the maximum number of young people and in line with best practice. The Task Force recently commenced a pilot programme working with three post primary schools and a Youthreach centre. This pilot programme which is engaging with 200 young people will be evaluated and reviewed as required. There are already several other schools which are seeking to be part of the next phase of this programme. The Task Force acknowledges the excellent work of the previous provider which had been funded for the last 21 years. However, in those intervening 21 years, the local and emerging needs of young people and the responses required have changed significantly, and it was appropriate for the Task Force to undertake a review. It was also the analysis of the Task Force that the nature of the youth interventions and services delivered by the existing provider would more appropriately be resourced through other funding channels and responsible agencies which have been introduced in recent years. Finally, it is important to note that there has been no reduction in funding for education and prevention interventions targeting young people in Tallaght and Whitechurch. The reassignment of funding has resulted in a focus on greater number of young people, especially vulnerable young people, in response to local and emerging needs, to achieve better value for the very limited funding which TDATF receives and in line with the National Drugs Policy.

Both Task Forces have indicated that there has been no overall reduction in services targeting young people in their areas.

I trust this information is of assistance to you but should you have any further queries please contact me.

Yours sincerely,



Prof Eamon Keenan
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