

SUBSTANCE USE REGIONAL FORUM STRATEGIC PLAN 2024-2026



The South Western Regional Drug and Alcohol Task Force¹ recently changed its structure. Previously, it was an initiative hosted by an external organisation (County Kildare LEADER Partnership).

Today, it is an independent Company Limited by Guarantee (CLG)² with a new proposed trading name: Substance Use Regional Forum (SURF).

In 2023, the Board of Directors appointed a not-for-profit consultant to assist the company in drawing up a new strategic plan.

The consultant read all relevant materials, ascertained the views of 36 stakeholders – through one-to-one interviews, a focus group and an online survey – and worked with a steering group of Directors and staff to analyse the results and draft a plan that was then put out for further consultation in January 2024.

This is the final version, adopted by the Board in February 2024.

¹ <http://swrdaf.ie>

² Company number 711478



OUR VISION

A region in which individuals, families and the wider community are not harmed by the use of alcohol and other drugs.

OUR MISSION

SURF is the hub within Kildare, West Wicklow, South and West Dublin³ that tackles problematic substance use by:

- ✿ Identifying unmet needs
- ✿ Seeking solutions
- ✿ Providing supports
- ✿ Agitating for faster progress

³ SURF's geographical boundary is Kildare, West Wicklow and part of South Dublin (excluding those parts of the capital that are already served by Local Drug and Alcohol Task Forces)



OUR VALUES

SPACE

Solutions-driven

People-focused

Accountable

Collaborative

Evidence-informed



OUR STAKEHOLDERS

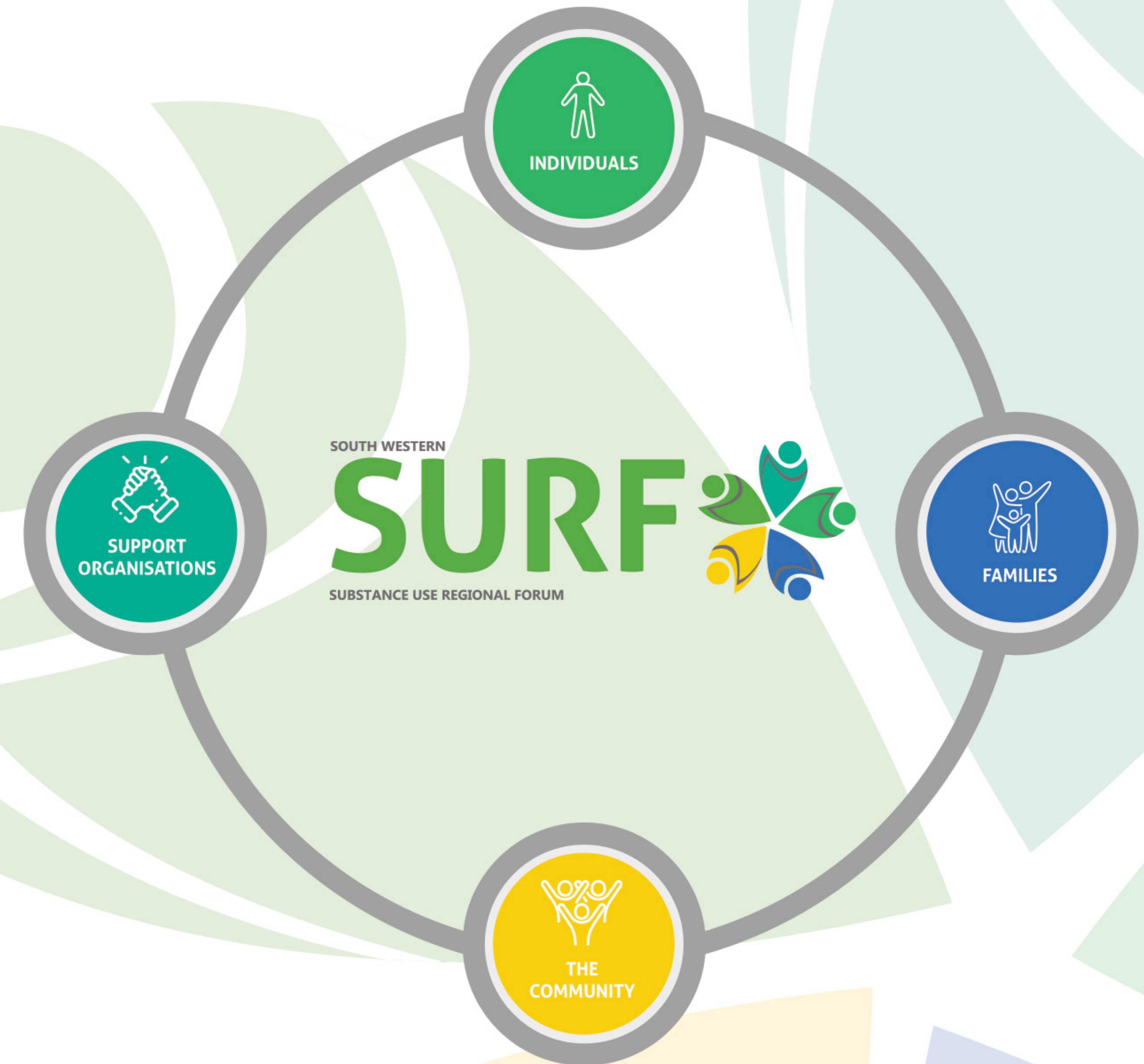
We operate at the centre of four key groups:

First and foremost, we consider individuals who are at risk of substance use disorder, have a substance use disorder, are in treatment or are in recovery.

We recognise the needs of families, who both bear the brunt of problematic substance use and are usually the individuals' main support network.

We understand people live in communities and that a community approach to substance use is therefore an essential piece of the puzzle.

Finally, and crucially, we know that it is only by pulling together all support organisations that exist that we will be able to deliver positive outcomes.



APPROACH

At its most basic, our role is to implement national policy around alcohol and other drugs at regional level. This includes Reducing Harm, Supporting Recovery: a health-led response to drug and alcohol use in Ireland 2017-2025 and related policy (see appendix).

Our plan for the coming three years is divided into three outward-facing strategic aims that seek to translate our mission into practical goals. However, we recognise that we also need to develop our internal capacity, so that we are in a sufficiently strong position to achieve those goals and to this end, we have also included one inward-facing strategic aim. The strategic aims, and the objectives that follow on from these aims, are detailed below.

STRATEGIC AIM 1: Raise the profile of SURF and its mission

- 1.1** To build a new website that acts as a vibrant resource for all matters relating to substance use in the region
- 1.2** To publish a regular email newsletter and/or maintain a limited number of effective social media channels that raise awareness of topical substance use issues
- 1.3** To engage with the media, both reactively and proactively
- 1.4** To organise a high-profile relaunch of the restructured, rebranded organisation and its new strategic plan
- 1.5** To organise and be present at appropriate events
- 1.6** To make effective use of relevant external initiatives⁴

STRATEGIC AIM 2: Map regional service provision and act on the results

- 2.1** To undertake a detailed mapping exercise of relevant services in the region⁵
- 2.2** To access and/or generate quantitative and qualitative data to analyse the service user journey and identify gaps in care pathways
- 2.3** To use evidence from the mapping exercise to formulate and/or receive proposals for improved linkages between services, better quality services, expanded services, reconstituted services, or new services
- 2.4** To decide the extent to which SURF should be a frontline service provider or incubator of same

STRATEGIC AIM 3: Ensure SURF is active on mission-critical external structures

- 3.1** To engage with, and positively influence, relevant decision-makers at local, regional and national level
- 3.2** To represent SURF on the Regional Chairs Network⁶
- 3.3** To represent SURF on the Regional Coordinators Network⁷ and relevant Strategic Implementation Groups
- 3.4** To represent SURF on the Kildare Local Community Development Committee
- 3.5** To represent SURF on the Kildare Children and Young People's Services Committee, and progress named actions in its Children and Young People's Plan 2023-2025
- 3.6** To represent SURF on the County Kildare Health and Wellbeing Committee⁸
- 3.7** To represent SURF on the Kildare Joint Policing Committee/Local Community Safety Partnership
- 3.8** To represent SURF on the Newbridge Forum as it rolls out its community safety initiative

⁴ Including but not limited to Awareness Week on Alcohol-Related Harm, Dry January, International Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders Awareness Day, International Harm Reduction Day, International Overdose Awareness Day, Recovery Month, Sober October and World Drug Day

⁵ To include services along the continuum, from prevention and early intervention, through to various levels of treatment and rehabilitation and onwards to recovery, both directly relating to drugs and allied services such as education, mental health, homelessness and so on

⁶ Chairpersons of Regional Drug and Alcohol Task Forces

⁷ Coordinators of Regional Drug and Alcohol Task Forces

⁸ A Healthy Ireland initiative

3.9 To represent SURF on the Interagency Advisory Group of the HEADSUP project that supports men's mental health and wellbeing

3.10 To act as regional lead for the Drug Related Intimidation and Violence Engagement (DRIVE) project

3.11 To lead on the expansion of the Safer Communities initiative in the region

3.12 To seek representation on other key external structures as necessary

3.13 To review the effectiveness of SURF membership of external structures on an annual basis

STRATEGIC AIM 4: Build a professional organisation with the capacity to delivery

4.1 To comply with all relevant legislation and regulation on an ongoing basis ⁹

4.2 To develop essential internal policies and procedures ¹⁰

4.3 To complete the organisation's rebranding exercise, including registering a Business Name for SURF ¹¹

4.4 To ensure the Constitution properly reflects organisational reality ¹²

4.5 To determine if SURF is deemed a charity in the eyes of the law and register if so ¹³

4.6 To determine if SURF is required to register as a lobbyist and meet the relevant requirements if so ¹⁴

4.7 To identify training and support needs of Directors and staff and draw up an action plan to meet these needs

4.8 To provide team building and networking opportunities for Forum members, Working Group members, staff from funded projects, SURF staff and SURF Directors

4.9 To review internal communications procedures and streamline these as much as possible

4.10 To seek continued and new funding from all suitable sources (statutory, philanthropic, corporate)

4.11 To review current processes for monitoring and evaluation and improve as necessary

4.12 To draw up operational plans for 2024, 2025 and 2026

⁹ Including but not limited to company, data protection, employment, equality and safeguarding law/regulation

¹⁰ With priority given to financial and employment policies and procedures

¹¹ <https://www.cro.ie/en-ie/Post-Registration/Business-Name>

¹² <https://www.cro.ie/en-ie/Post-Registration/Company/Memo-and-Arts-Change> - note that this must be done in tandem with any registration requirements demanded by the Charities Regulator

¹³ <https://www.charitiesregulator.ie/en/information-for-charities/registering-a-charity>

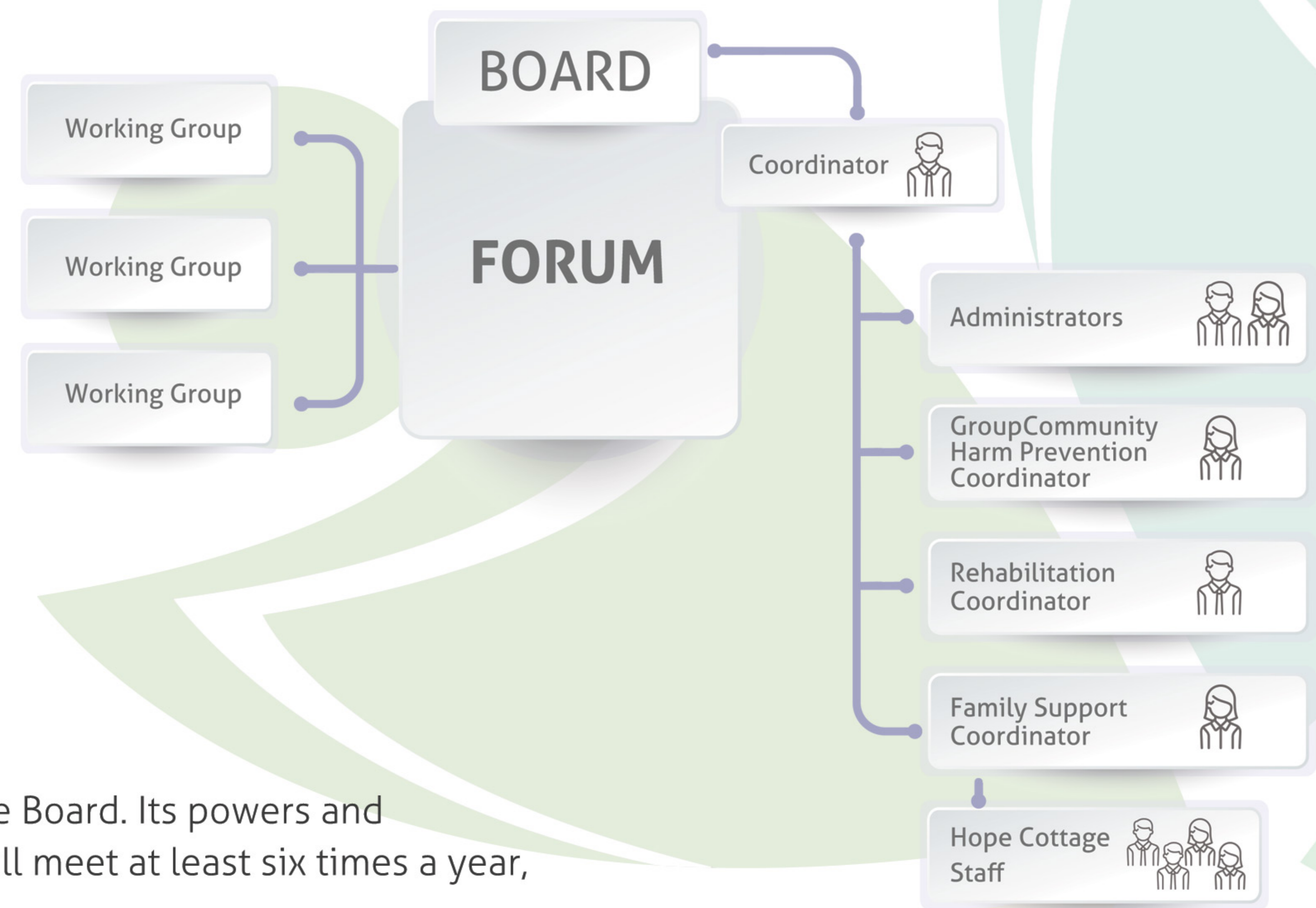
¹⁴ <https://www.lobbying.ie/help-resources/information-for-lobbyists/am-i-lobbying>



REVISED STRUCTURE

Our previous structure no longer met the needs of the region.

Our new structure is shown on the right, followed by an outline of the roles, responsibilities and decision-making powers of each of the components listed.



BOARD OF DIRECTORS

As the governing body of the CLG, 'the buck stops' with the Board. Its powers and responsibilities are listed in the Constitution. The Board will meet at least six times a year, ordinarily immediately after each Forum meeting.

Its governance duties include:

- Ensuring a membership that has a mix of 5-10 competent and committed individuals
- Appointing a Chairperson, Company Secretary and Treasurer
- Preparing for, attending and contributing constructively to Forum and Board meetings
- Providing organisational oversight
- Managing risk, including but not limited to, financial and reputational risk
- Ensuring two-way accountability processes are in place
- Ensuring good practice in employment is followed
- Supporting the Coordinator
- Being involved in strategic planning and signing off on final plan
- Receiving, considering and signing off on proposals from the Forum and Coordinator as appropriate.

The Forum is the new name for the old 'Task Force': a grouping of people who represent organisations/agencies with the capacity to influence substance use issues and/or individuals with lived experience of substance use, and who are therefore in an excellent position to advise on and contribute to a coordinated and integrated response to the problem within the region. As such, it is the primary driver of action.

Reflecting new realities, and in a bid to reactivate and optimise on people's limited time, its format has changed somewhat.

The following will be invited to be Forum members: all elected representatives (local and national), relevant statutory agencies and voluntary/community organisations, representatives from neighbouring Drug and Alcohol Task Forces, service users, and others with a legitimate interest.

Board members and the Coordinator are required to attend Forum meetings. Working Group members and other staff are also encouraged to attend.

The Forum, which will be chaired by the Chairperson of the Board, will meet six times per year¹⁵. Its responsibilities are:

- Progressing national substance use policy priorities within the region
- Being involved in strategic planning
- Inviting inputs from those operating 'at the frontline' within the region
- Establishing, as necessary, time-limited Working Groups to progress specific aspects of the Strategic Plan
- Considering proposals from Working Groups
- Making recommendations for Board consideration and sign-off as necessary.

¹⁵ Subject to review



COORDINATOR

The Coordinator is an employee of the Health Service Executive (HSE) charged with coordinating the work of SURF. The Coordinator is the link between the other staff and the Board, although the nature of the job means that, naturally, there is also a strong relationship with the Forum. The Coordinator's responsibilities are:

- Being involved in strategic planning
- Ensuring the strategic plan is operationalised
- Reporting to the Board
- Making recommendations for Board consideration and sign-off as necessary
- Supervising and supporting all staff¹⁶, which includes holding regular team meetings
- Representing the organisation externally¹⁷
- Coordinating the monitoring and evaluation of funded projects.

STAFF TEAM

The Administrators, Community Harm Prevention Coordinator, Rehabilitation Coordinator, Family Support Coordinator and Hope Cottage staff are direct employees of the company. Their function is largely an operational one, with their specific responsibilities laid out in their individual job descriptions.

WORKING GROUPS

The former standing subgroups have been reconfigured to align with strategic priorities. Governance and finance are now subsumed into the Board of Directors. For prevention, education, treatment, rehabilitation, and indeed any other topic, time-limited Working Groups will instead be set up to progress specific initiatives.

These Working Groups are subgroups of the Forum. Anyone with a legitimate interest may seek to join a Working Group. It is advised that one staff member sits on each Working Group and that brief terms of reference are drawn up. Working Groups may meet as often as is deemed necessary to ensure progress. The responsibilities of the Working Group are:

- Adopting an action-oriented approach to the specific issue at hand
- Drawing up costed and evidence-informed proposals for consideration by the Forum.

¹⁶ This excludes the staff of Hope Cottage who are managed by the Family Support Coordinator

¹⁷ The Coordinator may delegate aspects of this to other staff but retains responsibility for ensuring this is done effectively



Appendix: remit of DATFs as identified in National Drugs Strategy 2017-2025, Midterm Review 2021 and Strategic Action Plan 2023-2024

“DATFs will play a key role in coordinating interagency action at local level and supporting evidence-based approaches to problem substance use, including alcohol and illegal drugs.”

Midterm Review & Current Strategic Action Plan Strategic Priority	NDS Strategic Action	NDS Delivery	Responsibility
<p>1 Strengthen the prevention of drug and alcohol use and the associated harms among children and young people</p> <p>[Specifically in 2023-2024: 1.6 Mitigate the risk and impact of ‘grooming’ for young people in illicit drug distribution]</p>	<p>1.11 Ensure that the commitment to an integrated public health approach to drugs and alcohol is delivered as a key priority</p> <hr/> <p>1.2.3 Support the SPHE Programme</p> <hr/> <p>1.2.8 Improve services for young people at risk of substance misuse in socially and economically disadvantaged communities</p>	<p>a) Developing an initiative to ensure that the commitment to an integrated public health approach to drugs and alcohol is delivered as a key priority</p> <p>b) Promoting the use of evidence-based approaches to mobilising community action on alcohol</p> <hr/> <p>a) Promoting continued effective communications between local schools and DATFs given the importance placed on the continued building of strong school community links</p> <hr/> <p>Developing a new scheme to provide targeted, appropriate and effective services for young people at risk of substance misuse, focused on socially and economically disadvantaged communities</p>	<p>Lead: Department of Health (DOH) Partners: HSE, DATFs</p> <hr/> <p>Lead: Department of Education, DATFs</p> <hr/> <p>Lead: DOH Partners: Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration & Youth, HSE, DATFs</p>
<p>2 Enhance access to and delivery of drug and alcohol services in the community</p>	<p>2.1.13 Expand the availability and geographical spread of relevant quality drug and alcohol services and improve the range of services available, based on identified need</p>	<p>a) Identifying and addressing gaps in provision within Tier 1, 2, 3 and 4 services</p> <p>b) Increasing the number of treatment episodes provided across the range of services available, including: Low Threshold; Stabilisation; Detoxification; Rehabilitation; Step-down; After-Care</p> <p>c) Strengthening the capacity of services to address complex needs</p>	<p>Lead: HSE</p> <hr/> <p>Lead: DOH Partners: Community & Voluntary (C&V) Sectors, DATFs</p>



Midterm Review & Current Strategic Action Plan Strategic Priority	NDS Strategic Action	NDS Delivery	Responsibility
<p>2 Enhance access to and delivery of drug and alcohol services in the community</p>	<p>2.1.21 Respond to the needs of women who are using drugs and/or alcohol in a harmful manner</p>	<p>a) Increasing the range of wrap-around community and residential services equipped to meet the needs of women who are using drugs and/or alcohol in a harmful manner, including those with children and those who are pregnant b) Developing interventions to address gender and cultural specific risk factors for not taking up treatment</p>	<p>Lead: HSE Partners: DOH, DATFs</p>
	<p>2.1.22 Expand the range, availability and geographical spread of problem drug and alcohol services for those under the age of 18</p>	<p>a) Identifying and addressing gaps in child and adolescent service provision b) Developing multi-disciplinary child and adolescent teams c) Developing better interagency cooperation between problem substance use and child and family services</p>	<p>Lead: HSE, TUSLA Partners: C&V Sectors, DATFs</p>
	<p>2.1.23 Improve the response to the needs of older people with long term substance use issues</p>	<p>Examining the need for the development of specialist services to meet the needs of older people with long term substance use issues</p>	<p>Lead: HSE Partners: C&V Sectors, DATFs</p>
	<p>2.2 Maximise and strengthen the provision of evidence based family services to families affected by drug and alcohol use</p>	<p>b) Support National Social Inclusion Office to undertake mapping exercise/audit of family support services to identify gaps or other issues, HSE to continue rollout of 5 Step method via DoH funding</p>	<p>Lead: HSE Partners: CHOs</p>
	<p>2.2.30 Continue to target a reduction in drug-related deaths and non-fatal overdoses</p>	<p>b) Expanding the availability of Naloxone to people who use drugs, their peers, and family members</p>	<p>Lead: HSE Partners: C&V Sectors, UISCE, DATFs</p>



Midterm Review & Current Strategic Action Plan Strategic Priority	NDS Strategic Action	NDS Delivery	Responsibility
<p>4 Address the social determinants and consequences of drug & alcohol use in disadvantaged communities</p>	<p>4.1.39 Support and promote community participation in all local, regional and national structures</p> <hr/> <p>4.2.44 Promote the participation of service users and their families, including those in recovery, in local, regional and national decision-making structures and networks in order to facilitate their involvement in the design, planning and development of services and policies</p>	<p>Supporting and promoting community participation in all local, regional and national structures</p> <hr/> <p>Actively supporting frontline services through capacity building measures using evidence based models of participation in line with best practice</p>	<p>Lead: DOH Partners: C Sector, Local Authorities, Department of Housing, Local Government & Heritage, DATFs</p> <hr/> <p>Lead: DOH Partners: Relevant Departments and Agencies, C&V Sectors, DATFs, Networks of people who use drugs and alcohol, Networks of people who use services and/Family Support Networks</p>
<p>6 Strengthen evidence-informed and outcomes-focused practice, services, policies and strategy implementation</p>	<p>(Chapter 8) Strengthening the performance of the strategy</p>		<p>DOH, DATFs, HSE, Department of Education, Health Research Board, Academics, Civil Society</p>

Note that in the above table, where organisations and agencies have changed name, the new name has been inserted and where they have ceased operations, they have been removed from the list.



SUBSTANCE USE REGIONAL FORUM
STRATEGIC PLAN 2024-2026

SOUTH WESTERN

SURF

SUBSTANCE USE REGIONAL FORUM



www.surfonline.ie