

Hidden Harms (HH) Project

In February 2019 the DLR-DATF hosted an event - Knowledge into Action (KIA) – that included a workshop on the joint HSE / Tusla Hidden Harms Framework (HHF), which was launched in January 2019 (Insert link¹) The Framework seeks to address hidden harms to children arising from substance misuse by their parents or carers. There will be a national roll-out of HHF, and at a local level agencies and services in the field are encouraged to come together to develop bottom-up collaborative initiatives to support its implementation.

Following the KIA event, the Task Force linked with the Túsula’s Prevention, Partnership and Family Support Programme (PP&FS – insert link² and recruited field personnel to come together to develop a 3-year programme, specifically focused on HHF’s local, county-wide implementation.

During 2019 two seminars were held that brought together personnel from both Drug and Alcohol Services and from Children and Family Support Services, straddling both statutory and community/voluntary service providers.

The group have put together a series of ideas and proposed actions for the period 2020-2022, as set out in the Table below.

1 Heading	2 Ideas	3 Potential actions
Dialogue	Investigating the impact of COVID-19 on Hidden Harms. The child and the hidden impact on children and young people from addiction and substance misuse of parents/carers, particularly within the context of COVID-19	<i>Seminars:</i> <i>A webinar, perhaps using a modified Café Workshop or similar structure, to get ourselves and our colleagues to focus on what we know about impact of COVID-19 on Hidden Harms</i>
Contested issues	Explore and promote an understanding of the different perspective on hidden harms with attention to contested issues.	<i>As above</i>
Areas of collaboration	What inter-agency expectations do we have about collaboration, about the prospect of better working?	<i>As above</i>
Mapping	Systems of care: What can we do to contribute to developing systems, as distinct to simply developing services?	<i>Design an overall map of relevant supports and services (tie in with 3 x T&R subcommittees in the three DATFS: DLR, Bray and East Coast</i>
Sharing information	A key issue is the processing of information on an inter-agency basis. Protocols? Are there models out there we could investigate and research for doing this?	<i>We could potentially get a consultant to undertake a desk research and consultation exercise towards compiling an appropriate inter-agency protocol for sharing information (internal link³)</i>

¹ <https://www.hse.ie/eng/about/who/primarycare/socialinclusion/about-social-inclusion/news/hse-and-tusla-launch-new-hidden-harm-initiative-to-support-children-whose-parents-misuse-alcohol-and-other-drugs.html>

² <https://www.tusla.ie/services/family-community-support/prevention-partnership-and-family-support/>

³ The work of developing an Inter-Agency protocol for information sharing, but launching it into a second phase of implementation now paused as a result of COVID-19.

Disseminating information	Another information perspective is the need for a broader awareness around HH into the community: practitioners, parents and others?	<i>An action could be to have all the HHF documentation summarized into a single local brochure that is made widely available in DLR and also disseminated through public events, social media, etc</i>
Governance	What type of Governance can be put into place to shape and structure the work?	<i>Both the Drug and Alcohol Task Force and Tusla have agreed to develop an approach to Hidden Harms, as an action in the Prevention, Partnership & Family Support (PPFS) programme in Tusla. This provides a basis for reporting on progress both locally, through PPFS and DATF meetings, and up through Tusla structures and from the DATF up into the HSE and Department of Health. In addition, we could invite people to be members of a Steering Group (SG) to promote and support a three-year series of actions for enacting HHF locally</i>