



South East Regional Family Support Network (SERFSN)

Strategic Plan 2021-2025



South East
**Family
Support
Network**

Recovery for Families Affected
by Problem Substance Use

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Forward

Over the last twenty years about two thousand family members, like myself, have been helped by the South East Family Support Network. Family members in our groups know they are not alone; the stigma and isolation that come from addiction in the family become less when shared with others facing the same challenges.

We have been truly fortunate to have our coordinator for our five counties: Waterford, Kilkenny, Wexford, Tipperary, and Carlow. This has allowed us to set up family support groups serving many towns and rural areas. Our volunteer facilitators are trained by the network and have given their time, more than twenty thousand voluntary hours, increasing every year.

We have adapted to support family members during the Covid-19 pandemic by working smarter. We have used phone, texts, our website, emails to keep in touch and spread information and we have had self-care sessions and meetings on Zoom. We sent care packages by post to our family members, as we have had to pause our residential respite for now. Now we want to expand our network and so we have developed our Strategic Plan for the next five years. We know there are many more we have not been able to reach, across our five counties, and in all towns, villages, and rural areas. We need to grow, we need more volunteers, we need more training, and we need more staff who can back us up. Most importantly, we need more funding to support our huge voluntary effort. Although our impact has grown over the years, our funding has not. We have done more with less!

We will review our Strategic Plan over the next five years. Our family members and others who work with us will check that we meet our targets. The future looks bright and we will work hard to get all that we need to make the plan work: people, volunteers, funding, publicity, local and national services, goodwill, and commitment.

Join us in making this plan a real boost to families in the South East!
Family Member

Who We Are...



The South East Regional Family Support Network (SERFSN) is a peer-led voluntary/community organisation. We began as an informal group in 2004 in response to the lack of support for family members affected by a relative's problem substance use in the south east. In 2008 we established the organisation as a regional network, expanding our reach into Wexford, Carlow, Waterford, Tipperary and Kilkenny. Since then, the SERFSN has developed a track record in pioneering and innovating support systems and programmes for families. We adopt a community development approach to our work when addressing the complex issues of problem substance use.

It is the SERFSN's view that recovery is a journey the whole family takes, and families need to be sufficiently supported to play an undoubtedly challenging role in the recovery of a loved one. SERFSN has been a consistent collective voice in challenging the negative stigma affecting family members and has influenced policy and practice at national, regional, and local level. Over the past 12 years, the SERFSN has successfully increased the number of peer family support groups across the South East of Ireland, created a network of volunteer facilitators, and developed a unique range of self-care, respite and training programmes.

Goal 1

SERFSN Will Support Family Members Empowerment

- Family Members Have Support Access to;
- Respite
 - Selfcare
 - Understanding & Engaging in Whole Family Recovery
 - Learning
 - Training
 - Peer Family Support
 - New Family Support Groups

We Will Build Awareness of our Peer Support Model.

- Promoting Awareness of Peer Family Support
- Reaching Out to Families
- Peer Family Support Model
- Partnership with Services
- Lived Experience of Family Members Involvement In Research Model
- Encourage Recovery Capital in Community
- Creating Awareness of Whole Family Recovery

Goal 2

Family Member

Goal 4

We Will Strengthen the SER Organisation

- Secure Funding
- New Premises
- Create A Hub Of Support/Learning
- New Family Support Groups
- Support Team Of Voluntary Facilitators

We Will lead The Way in Understanding the Challenges Faced by Family Members and Influence Decision-Makers for Positive Change.

- Challenge the Stigma
- Promoting the Voice of Families
- Partnership with Agencies to Help Improvement in Services

Goal 3

‘Empathy and understanding from other family members has helped me greatly.’

Mission Statement

The **SERFSN** is a peer led organisation, committed to improving the situation for families affected by problem substance use of a relative.

We dedicate our focus to expanding, supporting, and strengthening the work of peer family support groups.

Our Values

Our values are formed by community development principles and related approaches. We support empowerment, participation, and collective voice of family members to influence for positive change.

1. We respect the lived experience of family members affected by problem substance use of a relative.
2. We take the view that family members affected by problem substance use of a relative are ordinary people dealing with extraordinary circumstances.
3. We recognise and draw on the experience of those affected.
4. We work in partnership and collaboration with other services and agencies relevant to the needs of those affected.

‘Being part of the family support group helps my confidence to deal with my son, I communicate better, I have better understanding of how we are all affected.’



‘I don’t feel as depressed about our situation, I learned to separate the issues and get on with my own life.’



What the Issues Are

Problem substance use affects people from all walks of life, from various socio-economic, geographic, and cultural backgrounds and communities. Research estimates that every substance user will negatively affect at least two close family members.

- Stigma and shame remain a significant barrier to family members accessing support for themselves and leads to isolation from communities and broader support networks. (SERDATF, 2019)
- Participants in SERDATF research described a lack of funding for family support in the region (SERDATF, 2019)
- Ireland has one of the highest drug overdose rates in Europe. According to the National Drug Death Index, 744 people died in 2016 from overdose and drug-related causes.
- In recent research, 37% of all treatment cases for drugs in the South East were adults under 25yrs compared to a national average of 29.1% young people under the age of 35yrs make up 82% of all drug treatment cases.
- There are gaps in information on recovery models in the South East and their overall effectiveness in preventing relapse. (SERDATF, 2019)
- From the latest research, 47.5% of people entering treatment for problem drug use in the South-East were living with a parent or family member (SERDATF 2019).

The current National Strategy, Reducing Harm, Supporting Recovery (2017-2025) acknowledges the importance of families in providing support to the person in recovery and reinforcing the beneficial effects of positive social networks. Building sustainable recovery resources, also known as “recovery capital”, includes internal and external resources needed to achieve and maintain recovery.

The strategy for the South East Regional Drugs Task Force emphasises the need for specific support for parents, carers, families and friends at a regional level. Promoting peer-led supports for family members affected by substance use issues is paramount to meeting this need.

‘Our whole family is affected by our son’s addiction, we all need to recover.’



Our Ambition

- To empower family members affected by problem substance use to respond effectively to the problem and engage in whole family recovery.
- To lead the way in understanding how substance misuse impacts the whole family, increase awareness of our peer support model to understand how we work and impact our communities.
- To be a catalyst for change and a voice for family members and communities at the centre of development of responses in the south east.
- To enhance and strengthen the SERFSN and ensure good governance is in place.



Goal 1

SERFSN Will Support Family Members Empowerment.

Family Members Have Support

Access to:

- Respite
- Selfcare
- Understanding & Engaging in Whole Family Recovery
- Learning
- Training
- Peer Family Support
- New Family Support Groups

Goal 2

SERFSN Will Build Awareness of our Peer Support Model.

- Promoting Awareness of Peer Family Support
- Reaching Out to Families
- Peer Family Support Model
- Partnership with Services
- Lived Experience of Family Members Involvement in Research Model
- Encourage Recovery Capital in Community
- Creating Awareness of Whole Family Recovery



Goal 3

SERFSN Will lead The Way in Understanding the Challenges Faced by Family Members and Influence Decision-Makers for Positive Change.

- Challenge the Stigma
- Promoting the Voice of Families
- Partnership with Agencies to Help Improvement in Services



Goal 4

Will Strengthen the SER Family Support Network Organisation

- Secure Funding
- New Premises
- Create A Hub Of Support/Learning
- New Family Support Groups
- Support Team of Voluntary Facilitators

*'I have more
confidence
& knowledge.'*

Strategic Direction

The development of this strategic plan provided the SERFSN the opportunity to step back from the day-to-day work and appraise its activities and impact. This process confirmed the positive impact our work has for family members, the process was also guided by the SERFSN's commitment to aligns with the latest emerging needs and up to date evidence-based practice. It is a pivotal period for the SERFSN to build awareness of our peer support model as a useful evidence-based model that meets families' needs and enhances the capacity and skills as an organisation to support Whole Family Recovery. The Network's dedication and integrity remain concrete and unwavering, and it is also aware that if more financial and human resources were made available, it could reach out to more families, offer increased learning opportunities and enhance social recovery capital.

The strategic development process was facilitated and aided by an outside consultant and involved four stages.



*'I feel less stressful
and able to
communicate
much better at
home.'*

Review of Vision, Values & Mission

This initial stage involved reflection on the Network's key characteristics, including its value system and re-defining the organisation's vision and mission. It provided a shared understanding of the SERFNS's development and its present position. Participants for this stage included SERFSN staff, board members and voluntary facilitators. Group sessions were summarised, and the results were agreed with the participants before moving to the next stage.

Analysis of Operational Environment

The second stage examined the current organisational context of the SERFSN and its operational environment. This discussion aimed to build a shared understanding of the Network's current capacity of staff and volunteers to respond to families' needs. The process was guided by the SERFNS's commitment to best available evidence, including the SERFNS's latest research, SERDATF and NDS research and plans. This stage presented the striking evidence that the SERFSN urgently needed expansion of the operational and organisational capacity to support families now and in the future.

Consult with All Stakeholders

Stage three included consultation with key stakeholders including family members, relevant agencies, both local, regional and national. Key progress outcome objectives were explored and expanded upon, and indicators were reached. As well as examining strategies currently employed by those agencies and examining how they fit within SERFSN's outcome objectives.

Development of Strategic Plan

Stage four coincided with the lockdown period brought on by the Covid-19 pandemic. During this time, SERFSN carried out extensive work as a team to review the full plan. The results of this phase were written up into an implementation table as presented on the following pages.

Strategic Goals

Our strategic goals are linked to specific goals and objectives of the National Drugs Strategy (NDS), (Reducing Harm, Supporting Recovery 2017-2025), available at www.drug.ie/ReducingHarmSupportingRecovery2017_2025.pdf and the Southeast Regional Drug and Alcohol Task Force (SERDATF), (Reducing Substance Misuse Strategy 2020-2023), available at www.serdatf.ie/download/serdatf-reducing-substance.

Our aim is to work in collaboration with services, agencies, our partners and associates including those involved in the HSE Four Tier Model available at <http://services.drugsandalcoholni.info/content/explanation-tiered-approach-service-provision>. Our goals are specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time bound.

Strategic Goals:	NDS	SERDATF
Strategic Goal 1: SERFSN will support family members' empowerment to respond effectively and engage in whole family recovery.	Goal 2.1.16 Goal 2.1.17 Goal 2.230 Goal 5.1.49 Goal 2.1.13	P4 P6 P11 P14
Strategic Goal 2: SERFSN will build awareness of our Peer Support Model	Goal 5.1.46 Goal 2.1.13	P15 P16 P18
Strategic Goal 3: SERFSN will lead the way in understanding the challenges faced by family members and influence decision-makers for positive change	Goal 4.1.39 Goal 4.1.41 Goal 4.2.44	P7 P10
Strategic GOAL 4: Strengthen the SER Family Support Network Organisation	Goal 2.1.17 Goal 2.1.27	P18

Strategic Goal 1: SERFSN will support family members' empowerment.

Why: To reduce the negative impact of problem substance use and support the engagement in whole family recovery

Strategic Priority	Strategic Actions	Expected outcomes	Time-frame
Strategic Priority 1.1: To ensure family members receive high quality, best practice, and consistent support as part of our peer support programme.	- Staff and voluntary facilitators continue to provide brief intervention for family members in crises and introduce family members to peer family support in their area. - Voluntary facilitators continue to facilitate peer family support groups. - Continue to provide respite opportunities for family members and facilitators. - Continue to adapt & provide online support/self-care for family members during Covid-19 Pandemic. - Continue to support peer family support groups to apply National Quality standards and group guidelines to their work. - Submit funding applications for Respite and other programmes. Emerging needs: - Provide each new family member with self-care and resource pack. - Provide back up support for each family support group. - Secure meeting room space for each Family Support Groups in Waterford, Wexford, Carlow, Kilkenny and South Tipperary. - Organise six workshops in response to needs identified by family members. - Provide specific support and information for families bereaved because of drugs or related causes.	Family members feel empowered to meet the challenges of problem substance use and awareness that recovery is possible for the whole family. Family members and facilitators have accessed to at least one respite, information and learning opportunity. Quality standards applied to all peer family support groups. Family support groups have a secure space to meet.	Ongoing

Strategic Priority	Strategic Actions	Expected outcomes	Time-frame
Strategic Priority 1.2: To expand & develop peer family support groups in more rural areas in each county in the South East.	Current and emerging need: - Identify & submit funding applications to employ a peer support worker. - Recruit & employ peer support worker implement development plan in collaboration with funders. - Respond to more family members across rural areas in each county. - Promote the value of peer family support in each county.	Peer family support worker employed with regional brief and expertise. Family members are participating in two more groups in urban and rural areas. Family support groups are responding to needs arising across urban and rural areas. Increase awareness across the region of supports available, leading to more referrals.	Jan 2021 April 2022 Ongoing Ongoing
Strategic Priority 1.3: To facilitate discussion within peer family support groups on issues that affect family members and improve their quality of life.	- Continue to organise annual two-day residential regional conference. Current & emerging need: - Provide opportunity for increased number of family members to attend the conference. - Include family members in review and adjustments of strategic plans. - Explore opportunities for family members engagement in local, regional & national decision & planning structures.	Number of family members participating in and benefitting from attending the annual conference increased from 65 to 85. Family members contribute to the review of the strategic plan. Family members are empowered to self-advocate and are involved in all aspects of the Network.	Nov 2021 Nov 2021 Ongoing
Strategic Priority 1.4: To ensure peer family support groups have trained facilitators in each county	Current & Emerging need: - Encourage and support family members to participate in a facilitation training. - Deliver the eight-week induction and facilitation training programme. - Provide guidance and support during the six-month practice period after training.	Core team of voluntary facilitators is maintained to account for those who retire and those who take a step back from facilitating for a period. Team contribute to and sustain peer support groups in each county.	Sept 2021 Ongoing

Strategic Priority	Strategic Actions	Expected outcomes	Time-frame
Strategic Priority 1.5: To introduce a new One to One 5-step brief intervention	Emerging need: - Develop and submit funding applications to relevant agencies to develop a 5-Step Intervention programme. - Provide skills update for those already accredited in 5-Step brief intervention. - Co-ordinate the delivery of 5-Step programme	Family members have access to a range of interventions, including brief interventions delivered by their peers.	April 2021 Ongoing

Strategic Goal 2: SERFSN will build awareness of our Peer Support Model Why: Increase awareness of our peer support model as evidence-based practice and its effectiveness as part of overall Whole Family Recovery.			
Strategic Priority	Strategic Actions	Expected outcomes	Time-frame
Strategic Priority 2.1: To develop a researched evidence-based model of SERFSN Peer Family Support	Emerging need: - Set up an advisory group to determine the objectives of the research and how we can achieve it. - Facilitate the involvement of family members in the research and development of the model.	Advisory committee devises term of reference and provide support for a research group. “Our Story – Our Peer Family Support Model” insight document is developed and approved.	Sept 2022 April 2023
Strategic Priority 2.2: To promote the evidence based SERFSN model of peer family support	Emerging need: - Launch the “Our Story-Our Peer Family Support Model”. - Work collaboratively with our partners to strengthen the delivery of the model throughout the South East.	The SERFSN peer support model is recognised as integral to the continuum of care framework for recovery. Services are more engaged & responsive in supporting the expansion of peer support across the region.	Sept 2023
Strategic Priority 2.3: To strengthen our monitoring systems and evaluation of our work	- Continue to review current evaluation and satisfaction materials to take account of changing needs. - Gather quantitative and qualitative evidence on the impact of our work. - Input to the ECASS data system and produce relevant reports.	The evidence base is increased through periodical evaluations, documented journeys, and evidence base case studies.	Ongoing

Strategic Goal 3: SERFSN will lead the way in understanding the challenges faced by family members and influence decision-makers for positive change Why: To ensure that family members are heard, and have their lived experience recognised as part of the overall response to problem substance use			
Strategic Priority	Strategic Actions	Expected outcomes	Time-frame
Strategic Priority 3.1: To support the establishment of a Regional Forum on Whole Family Recovery	Responding to emerging needs: - Bring the expertise of family members’ experience to the Whole Family Recovery Forum. - Work with key partners to improve their knowledge and understanding of families’ needs for Whole Family Recovery. - Build a collaborative partnership with HSE Tier 1,2,3, & 4 services.	Increased knowledge and understanding of the needs of families for Whole Family Recovery. All the stakeholders participate in the forum and agree on a framework for Whole family Recovery. A clear understanding of protocols and shared principles will be developed and agreed, leading to more effective communication and co-operation between services.	March 2021 Ongoing Ongoing
Strategic Priority 3.2: To engage in relevant local/regional multiagency networks to further goals of SERFSN	- Continue to participate in Recovery College (South East), CYPSC, SERFATF & NFSN. Respond to emerging needs: - Participation in ANSIN Network	SERFSN is more connected to key agencies/networks to develop work of the SERFSN	Ongoing Feb-Dec 2021

Strategic Priority	Strategic Actions	Expected outcomes	Time-frame
Strategic Priority 3.3: To promote and support family members' voice and participation in all local, regional, and national structures.	- Support the development of standards of community participation in relevant Networks. - Highlight issues affecting families and ensure inclusion of these issues on decision-making agendas at local, regional & national level.	Family members voice and expertise is an integral part of the response to problem substance use.	Ongoing

Strategic Goal 4: Strengthen the SER Family Support Network Organisation Why: To uphold the reputation and unique identity of the SERFSN and facilitate the effective delivery of our strategic goals.			
Strategic Priority	Strategic Actions	Expected outcomes	Time-frame
Strategic Priority 4.1: To retain existing and acquire new sources of funding to implement the plan	- Continue to prepare and submit annual documentation requirement as per HSE, Grant Aid Agreement. Respond to emerging needs: - Research funding opportunities. - Submit funding applications. - Comply with funding requirements.	SERFSN is sustainable with adequate funding to implement the strategic plan.	Ongoing Ongoing
Strategic Priority 4.2: To have a regional Centre of Peer Family Support.	Emerging needs: - Set up premises' subgroup to progress the goal. - Advisory group to research & secure suitable premises or the SERFSN.	Advisory group set up and identify a plan to secure premises to develop a center of excellence. Premises secured and process of continuous development is ongoing. SERFSN Centre is recognised as a centre of excellence for peer family support in the South East Region. The Centre is a hub for information, support, and learning.	Mar to Sept 2021 Sept 2022 2023 Ongoing
Strategic Priority 4.3: To support our team of voluntary facilitators and management committee to continue their valuable work	- Continue to deliver Voluntary Facilitators Peer Group Supervision programme. - Provide voluntary facilitators with an annual resource pack.	Majority of voluntary facilitators participate in five group sessions. Voluntary facilitators feel valued and supported. Team of facilitators have the resources to fulfil their role. All facilitators have completed the required training.	Ongoing Feb-April 2021

Strategic Priority	Strategic Actions	Expected outcomes	Time-frame
	Emerging need: - Facilitate updating of required training Childrens First training - Communicate effectively through open disclosure. - Hidden Harm - Gardai Vetting - Provide guidance & support for voluntary facilitators.		
Strategic Priority 4.4: To ensure good governance, procedures and roles are meeting the needs of the organisation and regulatory bodies	- Continue to submit quarterly reports for HSE and SERDATF. - Continue to comply with Charities Regulators requirements. Emerging Needs: - Staff and members of Management Committee participate in ASTIN training to support & enhance leadership and management skills.	An excellent standard of governance is maintained within the organisation, complying with all statutory, regulatory, and reporting requirements. The integrity of the SERFSN is maintained. Enhanced management & leadership skills of staff & Management team contribute to operational and organisational development of SERFSN.	Ongoing Feb-Dec 2021
Strategic Priority 4.5: To support family members involvement in all aspects of the organisation	- To continue to encourage all family members' participation in the Annual General Meeting and selection of SERFSN Management Committee membership. Emerging Needs: - Review policies of family member involvement. - Update and amend policies to reflect feedback from family members.	Increased number of family members take part in AGM and are aware of, and feel confident about, taking part in all aspect of the Network	AGM April Each year April 2021



Information:	
Our Team	Breda Fell, Coordinator (part-time); Catherine Foran, Development worker (part-time)
Directors	Angela Parker; Margaret Rossiter; Maurice Casey
Auditors	Stephen King, Walsh/King & Co, Georges Street, Waterford.
Company Secretary	Margaret Rossiter
Company Registration No.	490355
Charity Registration No.	19654
Registered Office	Millennium Building, Church Road, Lisduggan, Waterford
Website	www.peerfamilysupport.org

Our Affiliations, Funders, & Representation

Affiliated to:

National Family Support Network,
5 Gardiner Row,
Dublin 2.

Funders:

South East Regional Drug & Alcohol Task Force (SERDATF)
HSE, Social Inclusion Unit

Representation on:

South East Regional Drug & Alcohol Task Force
Waterford LCDC
National Family Support Network

Membership of:

PPN Kilkenny, PPN Carlow, PPN Waterford,
PPN Wexford & PPN Tipperary

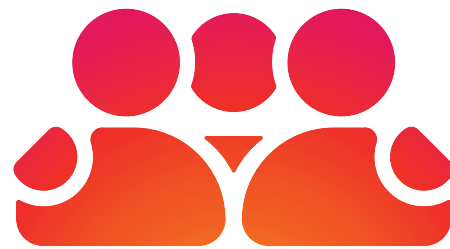
Our Collaborators, Partners & Associates

Aiseiri Group
Bedford Row Family Project, Limerick
Better Together, Recovery Group
Carlow Community Development
Carlow CRYs, CBDI & Outreach Services
CBDI & Outreach Services
Crystal Clear Thinking, Maureen Ryan
Céim Eile (Aiseiri), Waterford
Dr Mary Reidy, WIT
Dr Michelle Foley, WIT
Dr Sharon Lambert, UCC
Droichead FRC
Ecowellness Consulting LTD
Kilkenny LCDC
Kilkenny Leadership Partnership (KLP)
Kilkenny, Ossory Youth, CBDI
Merchants Quay Ireland (MQI)

MQI, St. Francis Farm
Newpark Close FRC
Recovery College, South East
Sacred Heart FRC
SMART Recovery Ireland
St Brigid's FRC
Urlingford FRC
Waterford South Tipperary, WSTCYS,
Wexford FDYS, CBDI & Outreach Services
Gardai Drug Related Intimidation Inspectors
Irish Prison Service
Irish Prison Reform Trust
Irish Council for Prisoners Overseas (ICPO)
The Courts Service of Ireland
Bishop Denis Nulty & diocesan clergy
SERDATF
HSE, Social Inclusion Unit

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South East
**Family
Support
Network**

Recovery for Families Affected
by Problem Substance Use