

# Crack cocaine is now proving the most problematic substance



**PROBLEMATIC:** Crack cocaine availability and use of the drug continues to sweep across communities

By Mary Dennehy  
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A NATIONAL Drug Strategy that recognises the seriousness of crack cocaine is needed, as the availability and use of the drug continues to sweep across communities.

Engaged with community drug work since 1996, councillor Mick Duff believes that crack cocaine is proving to be the 'most problematic substance' – and should be recognised at a national level.

The Vice Chair of the Tallaght Drugs and Alcohol Task Force, Cllr Duff is based at the St Aengus Community Action Group in Tymon North, a methadone programme, which is now providing crack pipes.

"Crack cocaine is emanating as being the most problematic substance," Cllr Duff said.

"For someone who is heavily addicted and taking crack cocaine seven days a week, it's costing a grand.

"Have a think about the fallout of that cost on any family.

"If a family is on social welfare, every penny coming in, is going out.

"If there's a minimum wage coming into the house, that will stop... it's impossible to keep a job down."

Cllr Duff re-iterated repeated calls from the community for additional resources and dedicated workers for crack cocaine programmes.

"The workload is extreme in all projects, especially for projects like JADD in Jobstown and CARP in Killinarden, which at the moment are at the cutting edge," he said.

"However, history has thought us that it will spread.

"The more I'm hearing, the more worried and concerned I am that this situation [with crack cocaine] will overwhelm projects."

Alongside demand for dedicated crack cocaine services, existing programmes for heroin are also under pressure.

"There is an increase in need for heroin services," Cllr Duff said.

"If a person is on a stimulant like crack cocaine all the time, heroin is used to come down.

"Tallaght has had treatment on

**"If a family is on social welfare, every penny coming in, is going out. If there's a minimum wage coming into the house, that will stop. . ."**

demand, walk-in services for heroin but we're facing waiting lists now.

"If you hear of a waiting list for heroin services, you know it is down to crack cocaine."

Following 25 years of experience in local drug work, Cllr Duff believes: "In areas where there is a concentration of users and dealers, we need to see [Garda] uniforms on the street.

"We need to see change in policing and an inter-agency approach.

"We need the HSE to be sitting down and listening to projects like JADD and CARP.

"We need recognition in the National Drug Strategy that crack cocaine should be treated with the same seriousness as opiates.

"There is a remoteness from TDs, we need a concerted effort.

"Now is the moment for people to step up to the plate."

Grace Hill, Tallaght Drugs and Alcohol Task Force co-ordinator, also called for an inter-agency approach – and a National Drug Strategy that recognises crack cocaine and the changing drug culture.

*The Echo* asked the HSE earlier this month about the National Drug Strategy, and how its programmes were reflecting the changing drug culture in communities.

Noting the extension of the sterile crack pipe programme, a spokesperson for HSE said: "The HSE has been aware for some time about the emergence of crack cocaine as a problem in certain areas and have been producing resources to support services to address this."

*The Echo* also contacted South Dublin County Council about its role in supporting communities affected by the impact of crack cocaine.

In a comment to *The Echo*, a council spokesperson said: "The council engages with all relevant agencies and stakeholders in relation to the delivery of effective estate management and tenancy sustainment.

"We have a dedicated Estate Management team and professionally qualified social workers available to provide support to council tenants who may be experiencing difficulty with their tenancy."

For further information on local supports and drug projects call the Tallaght Drugs and Alcohol Task force on 01 4649303 or visit [www.tallaghtdatf.ie](http://www.tallaghtdatf.ie)

# 100 crack houses estimated around

## 'This is all about our community, or

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"BEHIND every one of those houses is a person, and a family...", one local drug worker said when speaking about the emergence of crack houses in Tallaght – which is estimated to be at around 100.

As reported in *The Echo* earlier this month, JADD [Jobstown Assisting Drug Dependency] identified 31 crack houses in the Jobstown area.

Further reports from the South Dublin County Partnership estimate that there are around 100 crack houses across the wider Tallaght area.

Drug projects are also reporting that people are being coerced into sex work to pay off crack cocaine debts.

While focus is placed on the statistics, local drug worker James Kelly of CARP (Community Addiction Response Programme) in Killinarden spoke of the very real impact crack cocaine is having on those living in our communities, and their families.

"Behind every one of those houses is a person, and a family dealing with a crack cocaine addiction," James told *The Echo*.

"This is all about our community, our families, our brothers, our sisters.

"No one chooses to take crack cocaine and destroy their lives.

"The women and men who come into us are devastated.

"Crack cocaine ravages a person...it ravages body and mind.

"It's very hard to get off crack cocaine, especially in a community smothered in it...and every time you go to the shop, you're being offered samples of it."

CARP first administered crack cocaine pipes through a harm

reduction programme introduced in Tallaght in June 2018.

According to statistics provided to *The Echo*, some 389 clients received crack cocaine pipes from CARP in 2019, a number which increased to 564 in 2020.

The most recent figures for this year show that from January to April 2021, some 278 clients have received crack cocaine pipes from CARP.

"We just don't know how we're meant to look after the people we are supposed to be looking after," Mr Kelly said.

"Funding is a token gesture at the minute, we're fighting fire with buckets of water.

"We're saying this for years now, this is not going to stop, it will become more and more entrenched – it's going to get worse."

Mr Kelly stressed that when looking at ways to respond to the issue of crack cocaine, resources need to be invested in supporting the person with the addiction and their family.

CARP has been working alongside WASP Family Support in Rathfarnham on the provision of holistic supports to Tallaght families, which includes one-to-one support, family therapy and counselling.

Supports also include a kinship programme, which focuses on the role of grandparents where difficulties arise relating to care of children.

Services also include supporting and guiding family members impacted by intimidation.

"It's detrimental that we have family support services in Tallaght," Mr Kelly said.

CARP also runs a female crack support group, which incorporates evidence-based approaches and non-judgemental engagement.

The support group, for example, provides holistic sessions, access to primary health care and food hampers.

According to CARP, around 90 per cent of participants on its women's crack support group are current or previous heroin users.

CARP is one example of how projects working on the ground in Tallaght communities are responding, supporting and providing the best care they can within limited and stretched budgets.

These projects know what their communities need and what programmes can work.

They have been compiling evidence on the emergence of crack cocaine and its implications on the individual, the family and the wider community for a number of years – yet still, no dedicated funding.

According to Grace Hill, co-ordinator of the Tallaght Drugs and Alcohol Task Force, crack cocaine is a 'public health crisis' – set against a backdrop of no additional task force funding in 13 years.

"It's so easy to get crack cocaine at the moment, methadone users are approached leaving clinics, samples are being given out..."

"Crack cocaine is an all-consuming drug and is particularly concerning when children are living in the house.

"However, funding is no-where near sufficient, and projects are at capacity.

"The task force gives JADD and CARP €25,000 each [to support crack cocaine programmes], it helps to keep them going but it's piecemeal.

"We've been raising the issue, but nothing is changing, there's no political will."

Anybody in need of support can contact CARP on 01 4626033 or visit [www.carp.ie](http://www.carp.ie).