

**Are you aware of the number of grandparents in your constituency caring for their grandchildren as a result of drug use?**

**FACT:** The Guardian's Payment was reduced in 2010 from €176.50 to €169 and was reduced again in January 2011 to €161. This is in contrast to the rate of payment for the foster care allowance of €325/€352 for essentially the same role.

**How do you propose to counteract the intimidation of families by drug dealers as a result of drug related debt?**

**FACT:** Research published in 2009 by the Family Support Network shows 46 out of 50 family support services are working with families who are or have been intimidated by drug dealers as a result of drug related debt. This intimidation took the form of verbal threats, damage to personal property, physical violence, sexual violence and/or threats of sexual violence.

**Will your party support continued funding for the Family Support Network and local family support groups?**

**FACT:** The budget for voluntary and community drugs services has been reduced by 20% over the past two years at a time when the national budget has actually risen by 4.2%. In 2010 alone, overall government spending was down 1.8%, but spending on voluntary and community drugs services was down 11%. There have been significant reductions in budgets for flanking organisations dealing with the supply of drugs and the prevention of crime (e.g. the Garda Síochána budget) and rehabilitation (the probation services budget)\*.

\*Figures as outlined by Brian Harvey and presented at the CityWide Conference, ([www.citywide.ie](http://www.citywide.ie)).



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# FAMILY SUPPORT NETWORK



2011 GENERAL ELECTION  
**OUR FAMILIES,  
OUR VOICE,  
OUR VOTE.**

THIS ELECTION IS OUR OPPORTUNITY  
TO MAKE FAMILIES LIVING WITH DRUG  
USE A POLITICAL PRIORITY

As you are all aware a general election will be held in early 2011. Family members living with drug use want their issues to be at the forefront of the coming general election. The FSN is committed to achieving this in collaboration with other key stakeholders. In order for the FSN to achieve this we need your support. Please see inside to find out more.

## HISTORY:

Family Support Network was founded in 2000. Family Support Network operates with a strong community development ethos. The Network is a peer led organisation committed to promoting the empowerment, inclusion and participation of its members. Since 2000 the Family Support Network has built on its initial success. The Family Support Network works throughout the island of Ireland.

## MISSION STATEMENT:

Family Support Network is an autonomous self-help organisation that respects the lived experiences of families affected by drug use in a welcoming non-judgmental atmosphere. It endeavours to provide accurate information for families by developing personalised services that meet the real identified needs of families.

## AIMS OF THE NETWORK:

- Raise awareness of family support work and its role in the community
- Highlight the importance and value of work done by family support groups
- Provide information to families and communities on existing services and supports
- Campaign for better services for drug users and their families
- Highlight the extent of the drugs problem and its effect on families and communities
- Support the involvement of the people most affected by the problem in the development and running of services and to ensure that adequate supports are put in place to enable this to happen
- Remember and commemorate those who have died as a result of drugs

- Offer support to each other as members of the Network
- Develop the Network as an autonomous, professional, national organisation

## WHAT IS FAMILY SUPPORT?

Family support can be offered on a one-to-one basis or in a group setting. The model of family support that the Network advocates is peer family support. This is where a number of people with a common problem, in our case living with drug use, come together to share their experiences.

## WHAT IS A FAMILY SUPPORT GROUP?

A Family Support Group is a safe, confidential and non-judgmental place for family members of drug users to come together to discuss common issues in relation to coping with drug use within the family itself.

## QUESTIONS FOR CANVASSERS AND POLITICIANS:

The Family Support Network encourages family members to ask questions of their politicians from the 'Questions for Canvassers and Politicians Card'. The Family Support Network is aware that there are multiple issues facing families living with drug use. If there are issues of particular relevance to your family or local area be sure to add them to the list.

Please see below for the questions that feature on the 'Questions for Canvassers and Politicians Card':

- Is your party aware of the issues facing families living with drug use?
- Will your party support the development of the Family Support Network and local family support group(s)?
- Will your party support the implementation of the National Drugs Strategy 2009—2016 in its entirety?
- Will you meet with the local family support group(s) in this constituency?

**The Family Support Network has compiled a more detailed list of questions based on the issues facing families living with drug use:**

**What are your party's policies with regard to supporting families living with drug use?**

The National Advisory Committee on Drugs reported in 2007 that families living with heroin use tend to have problems in the following four areas: physical and psychological health of families, the financial and employment well-being of the family, the wider social life of family members and family relationships.

**How do you plan to encourage drug services to involve family members in their loved one's treatment and rehabilitation?**

The report of the working group on Drugs Rehabilitation recommended that "the potential involvement of the family in supporting the recovering drug users should be utilized". It is currently service-dependent as to whether a family, as an agent of recovery, is encouraged to support their loved one through the rehabilitative process.

**Does your party have a strategy to reduce the number of drug related deaths?**

Between 1998 and 2007 a total of 3,465 drug-related deaths and deaths among drug users was recorded. The annual number of deaths more than doubled in nine years, rising from 242 in 1998 to 491 in 2006\*.

\*Health Research Board, 2010 ([www.hrb.ie/publications](http://www.hrb.ie/publications)).

**Do you support the development of a respite programme for families living with drug use?**

Action 41 of the National Drugs Strategy 2009 – 2016 supports the development of a short-stay respite programme for families of drug users. This respite programme has yet to be developed.