**STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF COMMUNITY REPS ON NORTH INNER CITY DATF 7/7/2021**

As you may have heard, the Dept of Health has suspended the activities of the North Inner City DATF and is putting in place its own process to appoint a Chairperson and to broaden the membership of the Task Force. The Dept of Health is basing this decision on an accusation of “governance shortcomings in the NIC Drug and Alcohol Task Force.” **The Task Force absolutely and totally rejects this accusation, it views the actions of the Dept as completely unjustified and it is intent on defending the honesty, integrity, and professionalism of the Chairperson, directors, members and staff of the Task Force.**

In the 25 years since the NIC DATF was established, there have been no governance shortcomings raised with the Task Force and the Dept has made this allegation without presenting a shred of evidence.  The only “governance shortcoming” that the Dept of Health refers to is the recent Task Force process for the appointment of a new Chairperson and, contrary to what the Dept is saying, the Task Force has complied with all the requirements set out in the DATF handbook.

We can state, without reservation, that the process put in place for appointment of the Chair has been collectively agreed and implemented with complete transparency by all of the Task Force members across community, voluntary and statutory sectors. The outgoing Chair has carried out his duties in this matter with honesty and integrity and through consensus, and the person selected by the Task Force as the next Chair fully complies with the requirements as outlined in the handbook, including not being connected to any of the projects funded by the Task Force.

Despite all of this, the Dept of Health has intervened in the process to block the Task Force from going ahead with the appointment of the new Chair. The Dept representative intervened first as a member of the NEIC Programme Implementation Board, then changed to an intervention directly on behalf of the Dept, looking for a three-person interview panel to be put in place with a Dept rep, a HSE rep and a DATF rep. It is unprecedented in 25 years of the DATFs for the Dept of Health or any parent department to intervene in this way in the selection of a Chair and the Task Force did not agree with this proposal, as it is not in compliance with the handbook nor is it in compliance with company law.

This action of the Department in suspending the DATF for “governance shortcomings” has been taken in the complete absence of any procedures based on natural justice or a right to reply. It has tainted both the personal and professional reputations of the directors, members and staff of the Task Force by presenting them as unfit and untrustworthy to carry out the work of the NIC DATF. The Dept is also proposing to remove every shred of independence from the Task Force by taking over the appointment of the Chair and the appointment of members.

**The North Inner City DATF is calling on the Dept to withdraw its decision to suspend the Task Force by Friday 9th, at which point, if this does not happen, the DATF will be obliged to take further steps to defend its good name and reputation. We ask you to support us in this call and to contact your public representatives to look for their support.**