



## policy background

In 2005, the Department of Health, Social Services, and Public Safety ([DHSSPS](#) [click to visit](#)) led the development of a strategy that aimed to reduce the harm related to both alcohol and drug use in Northern Ireland.

The DHSSPS launched this strategy, entitled the 'New Strategic Direction for Alcohol and Drugs' ([NSD](#) [click to view](#)), in 2006.

The NSD was originally a five year strategy, but it was reviewed, revised, and extended until 2016. This was called 'New strategic direction phase 2 (2011-16)' ([NSD2](#) [click to view](#))

The latest version of the strategy can be viewed [online here](#) ([click to view](#))

The strategy has two broad themes:

- "Children, Young People, and Families"; and
- "Adults and the General Public".

One of the main targets of the 'Adults and the General Public' strand, was to encourage and support the development of local and regional service user groups, so that service users could be 'adequately and appropriately involved in planning and provision of treatment and support services'.

This meant contributing to policy and planning groups both locally and regionally.

The 'Alcohol and Drug Commissioning Framework for Northern Ireland 2013-16' ([read online here](#)) also called for the development of a Service User Network to enhance involvement of adult service users in the planning of alcohol and drug services, as outlined in its 'Regional Commissioning Priorities'.

As part of its 'Local Commissioning Priorities' it stated that all alcohol and drug services should demonstrate effective user involvement.

From these priorities, rsun was born. rsun was originally set up in 2011 by the Public Health Agency for Northern Ireland (PHA), as a way to coordinate the good examples of user involvement at local level.

In 2013, Council for the Homeless NI (CHNI) was tasked with the ongoing development and support of the network, and has managed the rsun project since.

CHNI currently employ two coordinators ([visit rsun site for more info](#) [click to view](#)) to support the network and groups across NI, as well as providing individual support and advice.

## contact us

If you have any questions about rsun, about the roles of the rsun project co-ordinators, about starting up a group, or how to get involved with rsun in another way, get in touch.

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