

BLANCHARDSTOWN **DIAL TO STOP DRUG DEALING**

Campaign Evaluation Executive Summary Report

November 2006

Public Communications Centre and Grogan Research



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Introduction

In January 2006 Blanchardstown Local Drug Task Force (BLDTF) and Public Communications Centre (PCC) finalised a direct marketing and communications plan to launch a new confidential phone line to help gather information on drug dealing. The initiative was a part of BLDTF's supply reduction programme of work. The key elements of the project were to:

- **develop a campaign brand for the number**
- **devise a set of materials to promote the number**
- **devise and implement a strategy to distribute the materials to the target audiences,**
and
- **monitor and evaluate response.**

Two similar projects had taken place in nearby areas but the BLDTF initiative was unique in that the phone number used was non-Garda.

The project was initially set up as a test to run for six weeks from early May to mid-June. However, due to its success it has been extended. This evaluation report is concerned with the initial six-week period.

The findings in this report are drawn from three sources:

1. the daily reports from the call centre
2. a report from the Gardaí, and
3. a public survey of a sample of 250 people.

The findings from the public survey were subjected to regression analysis – the most commonly used tool to analyse Quantitative data – which in turn generated some new insights. The authors of the evaluation report are Carmel Grogan (Grogan Research), John Sutton (Public Communications Centre), Peter Walker (Greater Blanchardstown Response to Drugs) and Joseph Doyle (Blanchardstown Local Drugs Task Force).

Copies of the full evaluation report including details of methodology are available on www.gbrd.ie or www.pcc.ie or by emailing bldtf@mailc.hse.ie. The executive summary of the report is available in pdf format from the same addresses.

Project Outline

The specific aims of the DIAL TO STOP DRUG DEALING campaign were:

- 1. To generate calls to the number**
- 2. To gather as much good information as possible**

The key audiences for the campaign were people who had information on drug dealing and they were segmented into three groupings:

Adults
Young Adults (18-25), and
Older Children (15-18)

The central proposition of the campaign was to ask the target audiences to call a confidential phone number and give information on drug activity they witnessed, or knew of, in their area.

In order to try to encourage people with good information to make the call, the following case was made to them:

- **The number is free** – it was felt that this was important for Older Children/Younger Adults.
- **The number is anonymous** – this was felt to be important for some people who might feel they would be dragged into legal proceedings.
- **It is a non-Garda number** - because it was felt that for some people phoning a police number would be a serious barrier.
- **Second-hand information is good** – you don't have to witness drug dealing - call whenever it suits you – the service was open 24 hours, 7 days per week.
- **The group requesting the information is an alliance of local organisations** who are working to stop drug dealing in the area.

Over the six-week period of the campaign, several initiatives and actions were undertaken, including:

- **Week 1 & 2** - the launch of the campaign with the distribution of 30,000 brochures, 250 in-store posters and a national and local media launch event.
- **Week 3 & 4** - focused on Older Children and Younger Adults in the formal and informal educational/community sector. Thousands of brochures and postcards were distributed and peer education teams spoke in schools and community centres.
- **Week 5** - comprised a retail initiative involving over twenty businesses - Supermarkets, Food Take-Aways and Delivery Services (Chipper, Chinese, Pizza) who agreed to distribute 20,000 campaign postcards from Thursday to Saturday.

The activities in week 1 and 2 were aimed at informing as many of the target audiences as possible. Activities in the subsequent weeks were aimed at reinforcing the campaign messages and persuading people to make calls.



Key Findings

Context

By and large the campaign was implemented as planned, on schedule and within budget. There was very good media take up on the project, good local support from key stakeholders and a good response to the core materials. An Post, however, failed to deliver the campaign brochures to households on schedule. An important general point worth noting is that because the callers were anonymous, we were not in a position to determine how they heard of the campaign and what was prompting them to respond.

Quantity of Calls – Call Centre Evaluation

- 1** The number of calls received and answered was 296 which is very significant.
- 2** 100 detailed reports were sent to the Gardaí on foot of the calls.
- 3** The number of calls declined significantly over the six weeks – from a high of 90 within the first 48 hours to 10 within the last 48 hours. 58% of all calls were made within the first 2 weeks – down to 7.5% in the last two weeks.
- 4** The educational/community initiative did not generate any lift in the number of calls.
- 5** The retail initiative did not generate any lift in the number of calls.

Quality of Calls – Gardaí Evaluation

- 6** The research indicates that the majority of reports generated (67%) provided either “somewhat useful or very useful” information to the Gardaí.
- 7** The majority of reports indicated that cocaine was the most frequently supplied drug (42%). Cannabis and heroin also figure significantly in the reports with figures of 27% and 17% respectively. These were followed by ecstasy at 7%, prescription drugs at 5% and steroids at 2%.

- 8** The location of the reported drug dealing was primarily in the Dublin 15 area. This is not a surprising statistic given that this was the target area of the campaign. However, given the amount of national press coverage it is interesting to note that information provided outside of the Dublin 15 area concerned other Local Drug Task Force areas (9%) and Regional Drug Task Force areas (9%).
- 9** Of the reports that were followed up by the Drugs Unit of Blanchardstown Garda Station, 17% were referred on to other Gardaí districts as they contained information outside of the Blanchardstown district. Of the remaining reports, 17% have resulted in arrests with court cases pending, 7% are awaiting further information, 2% are being monitored and 59% are currently part of ongoing Gardaí investigations.
- 10** The Gardaí reported that the information generated in some of the reports had been very helpful - it confirmed suspicions, identified new dealers and assisted intelligence by providing more information.
- 11** The Gardaí noted that in their general dealings with the public in Dublin 15, the campaign had succeeded in highlighting awareness of the drug situation in the area.

What The Public Think – Public Survey & Regression Analysis

- 12** Drugs are perceived to be a social problem in the Dublin 15 area. Drugs are regarded as a greater social problem by Youths than by Adults. Youths rate drugs higher than any other social problem. Only 37% of Adults rate drugs as a social problem – it is preceded by ‘crime’ (59%). Youths put ‘crime’ in second place.
- 13** Drugs are also regarded as a serious general problem in the Dublin 15 area. 49% of Youths say it is ‘very serious’ and 89% describe it as either ‘very’ or ‘somewhat’ serious. The seriousness of the drugs problem is not as great for Adults - 29% said ‘very serious’ while 70% said ‘very’ or ‘somewhat’.
- 14** As a person considers drugs to be a social problem on an increasing scale, their general perception of the seriousness of the problem increases.
- 15** There is a strong perception that the public should be encouraged to help the Gardaí with the drugs problem in the Dublin 15 area. There is a stronger level of

commitment for this help among Youths than among Adults with 46% of Youths saying ‘yes definitely’ compared to 37% of Adults. As a person’s perception of the “Seriousness of Drug Dealing in Dublin 15” increases, there is a parallel increase of opinion that the public should help the Gardaí in tackling the problem. This is significant in that it reflects an opinion about public responsibility and that the Gardaí should be assisted.

- 16** As a person’s perception of the “Seriousness of Drug Dealing in Dublin 15” increases, it was found that this is more likely to be a male perspective. This raises questions regarding differences between men and women on both awareness of the issue and levels of concern about it.
- 17** There is limited satisfaction about how the Gardaí are handling the drugs problem in the Dublin 15 area. Youths are least satisfied and more uncertain about the performance of the Gardaí - 55% answered ‘don’t know’. Half of Adults are ‘very’ or ‘somewhat’ satisfied.
- 18** It would appear that there may be an apparent link between the level of satisfaction with the Gardaí’s handling of the drugs problem and the perception of drugs as a social problem in the area – i.e. the lower the satisfaction, the greater the perception of the problem.
- 19** There is an opportunity for community involvement in alleviating the drugs problem in the Dublin 15 area. Drugs are recognised as a social problem in the area that needs to be tackled. The level of satisfaction with the Gardaí is mixed. Therefore, the public could be encouraged to assist the Gardaí in their handling of the drugs problem.
- 20** There is positive recall of any media campaign to try to stop or reduce drug dealing in the Dublin 15 area. More than half spontaneously recall any campaign on the issue: 57% of Adults and 49% of Youths.
- 21** More than half spontaneously recall a specific campaign advising the public to telephone a number in the event of having information on drug dealing activity in the Dublin 15 area (i.e. ‘Dial to Stop Drug Dealing’). Just under half recalled the specific campaign when prompted with a show card depicting examples of the printed media: 47% of Youths and 42% of Adults.
- 22** There was a variety of media recalled for the ‘Dial to Stop Drug Dealing’ campaign. The highest level of recall was for the brochure door drop – it was mentioned by 67% of Adults and 58% of Youths. This was followed by recall of a local press ad. There was low mention of postcards – by 23% of Youths.

- 23** There was accurate recall of the detail associated with the ‘Dial to Stop Drug Dealing’ campaign. The main message elicited from the campaign was to ‘help by phoning’ – this was mentioned by 88% of Youths and 57% of Adults. There was lower mention of other detail: ‘action to prevent drugs’, ‘independent & confidential’, and ‘report information’.
- 24** The research indicates that the ‘Dial to Stop Drug Dealing’ is a workable campaign. The door drop was the most effective medium. There is clear communication of meaningful messages. There are positive attitudes towards the campaign.
- 25** That each call would be treated with absolute confidentiality was ‘very important’ for three quarters of the sample: 76% of Youths and 73% of Adults.
- 26** That second-hand information can help the fight against drugs was very important for 58% of Adults and 53% of Youths.
- 27** That the public can contribute to the success in the fight against drug crime was very important for 60% of Adults and 51% of Youths.
- 28** There is less certainty around the outcome of the call – while most claim that it is ‘very important’ knowing that ‘calls will not necessarily result in instant visible response by the Gardaí’ (47% of Adults and 47% of Youths) there were notable levels of ‘don’t know’ among respondents: 27% of Adults and only 7% of Youths.
- 29** The expected outcomes of a call to a non-Garda number are positive. ‘Action’ and ‘results’ are expected in the form of ‘Gardaí follow-up’ and to ‘get rid of drug pushers’. There is a proportion who expect ‘nothing’ to happen and/or ‘don’t know’ – Adults (21%), Youths (28%).
- 30** There is a preference by the public to call a ‘Garda’ rather than a ‘non-Garda’ confidential telephone number to give information on drug activity in the area. However, as regression analysis results would indicate, the more significant a person’s perception of the “Seriousness of Drug Dealing in Dublin 15”, the greater the likelihood of calling a ‘non-Garda’ number. This indicates a niche and a need for a ‘non-Garda’ telephone line to report drug-dealing information.
- 31** Adults are more likely than Youths to call any number – they are twice as likely to call a Garda number (49% ‘very likely’) than a non-Garda number (23% ‘very likely’).

- 32** Youths are also twice as likely as Adults to call the garda number: 27% would ‘very likely’ call a Garda number while 15% would ‘very likely’ call a non-Garda number.
- 33** The motivation to call either confidential number is similar for both Adults and Youths – it is driven by a community spirit. The stated reasons for calling a Garda phone number reflect acknowledgement of Garda power / authority and an expectation for action, to help to fight the drug problem in one’s own area and to benefit the local community. The reasons for calling a non-Garda phone number would be to help to fight the drug problem, to benefit the community and the promise of confidentiality.
- 34** The inhibitions for calling either confidential number are also similar for both Adults and Youths – they are concerned about personal issues. The claimed reasons for not calling a Garda phone number include a dislike/disregard for the Gardaí, concerns about anonymity and confidentiality, fear of reprisal and a reluctance to get involved.
- 35** With an increase in a person’s perception of the “Seriousness of Drug Dealing in Dublin 15”, there was a parallel increase in opinion that confidentiality was an important factor. This is significant in that it strongly endorses the anonymity factor of the campaign.
- 36** The reasons for not calling a non-Garda phone number also includes a fear of reprisal, a reluctance to get involved and concerns about confidentiality.
- 37** Youths were asked: ‘Do you think there is enough Gardaí on the street to deal with the drug problem in the Dublin 15 area’. Half agreed that there is enough Gardaí on the streets - 51%.

Key Recommendations

The steering group has examined the findings of the four elements of the evaluation reports and has agreed to the following set of recommendations:

- 1.** The campaign has demonstrated sufficient success and effectiveness to warrant being adapted and piloted Statewide.
- 2.** In order to improve the campaign strategy and messaging, a qualitative research project should be undertaken. This project would involve a combination of one-to-one in-depth interviews and focus groups with key audiences. The key issues to be explored would be;
 - better messaging especially for Younger Adults and Older Children
 - better messaging re managing the number – who is asking for the information and who handles it?
 - better promotional ideas for the campaign – better targeted actions in schools and community settings.
- 3.** A strategy should be developed that would allow callers to be asked what was prompting them to call. This would provide key insights into what was working best in the campaign and allow the promoters to improve their tactics and strategy.
- 4.** Keeping the campaign top of mind over a longer period of time will require a greater investment in publicity, advertising and direct marketing. The possibility of developing national and local media partners should be explored. Advertising could be very effective at local level in guaranteeing a constant profile for the campaign. Debris-net banners in key locations would be very effective.
- 5.** Any schools initiative should be delivered through a peer-education approach (if such groups exist within the target area). It was noted by community representatives that the target age group should have included first year students upwards as there is an awareness of the issue amongst younger children. For this target group, the schools' S.P.H.E. programme presents one avenue to discuss the issue of supply reduction in tandem with such a campaign.

6. The Youth and Community Initiative should be area-specific. This will assist in the evaluation process as approaches may differ from community to community (area to area). Residents Associations and Neighbourhood Watches should also be approached to assist with local community initiatives.
7. A dedicated full-time project manager should be put in place for the duration of the campaign. The primary responsibilities would be to:
 - secure sponsorship and support
 - manage media relations
 - manage the distribution of materials
8. It is also recommended that a national roll-out of the campaign take place. This roll-out should be one promoted locally through the Local and Regional Drug Task Forces structures. This is in line with Action 5 of the National Drug Strategy which states:

"To establish, in consultation with the Gardaí and the community sector, best practice guidelines and approaches for community involvement in supply-control activities with law enforcement agencies".



