



“SINGING FROM THE SAME HYMN SHEET”:

an evidence base for the development of an
interagency Drug Related Intimidation (DRI)
specific training programme in the SICDATF area

A RESEARCH SUMMARY REPORT

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There needs
to be an urgent
delivery of how
to deal with DRI
communities



Foreword

The South Inner Drugs Task Force (SICDATF) was established in 1997 as one of eleven Local Drug Task Forces set up to implement the actions of the National Drug Strategy (NDS) Reducing Harm Supporting Recovery, through an integrated response, meeting the needs of individuals, families and communities. The SICDATF is committed to a partnership approach and has worked closely with people using services, the community, and statutory and voluntary sectors on action research, training, and funding initiatives.

South Inner City Dublin Drug
and Alcohol Task Force



Mission Statement

Our mission is to create a South Inner City Dublin where the harms caused to individuals, families, and communities by substance misuse are greatly reduced and public health and safety are protected. Coordination of quality services that enable healthy, safe, and resilient communities across the South Inner City are key to what drives us forward in our work.

Acknowledgments

The SICDATF would like to acknowledge the participation of all the stakeholders in the south inner city; including the voluntary, community, statutory stakeholders, An Garda Síochána and the HSE Addiction Services CHO 6 & 7. We recognise your commitment to working collaboratively to find community-based responses to drug-related intimidation. Most importantly, those community members who shared their personal experiences of DRI. Without you all, this research would not have

Background and Context

The literature tells us that DRI tends to occur primarily in areas where there are high levels of crime and drug sales and is typically carried out by those involved in the sale and supply of drugs. People who use drugs are typically the victims of DRI, usually through the accrual of drug debts. However, this is a complex dynamic, as people who are victims of DRI can sometimes be perpetrators in their efforts to collect money to pay their debts and avoid repercussions from those they are in fear of.

There is a hierarchy to the drug economy which creates three distinct levels: global production and trafficking (cartels); a middle market responsible for the importation of drugs into Ireland and distribution of them nationally, and local markets which distribute drugs

at a community level. In disenfranchised communities, the drug economy may appear to be the only realistic means of employment for young people who are enticed by this seemingly easy and accessible way to make money.

There exists a fear of reprisal which often prevents victims of DRI from making reports to the police. This is a significant factor in responding and intervening in these incidents and breaking down the subculture in which they occur. Mistrust in policing is commonplace in areas with high rates of crime and high rates of drug related activity.

At the heart of the DRI issue is the impact that it has on communities where it occurs. A human rights approach that demonstrates empathy towards both victims and perpetrators, with the knowledge that both interconnect in the drug economy is warranted, alongside trauma informed approaches to interacting with people who have been the subject of adversity, poverty, exclusion and adverse childhood experiences

(ACES). The creation of communities where family relationships, friendships, and neighbourly relationships are fostered and restored where fractured is a priority. Promoting social inclusivity and strengthening family support and early intervention. Establishing a strong community leadership body is key, using an interagency approach. This interagency approach is at the heart of the training programme which was developed from the research conducted for this project..



There is always lots
of talk around drug
issues but very little
on the ground for the
people involved.

Methodology for the Research

This research project utilised a mixed methods approach. Firstly, a documentation analysis and literature review were conducted. This included literature and reports from the Irish and international context in order to map the various approaches that are utilised across various jurisdictions to either prevent, deter or intervene in drug related intimidation or violence.

Secondly, empirical research was conducted in the SICDATF region. There were three strands to the field research: two online surveys; focus groups and interviews with people working in the SICDATF and interviews/focus groups with a small cohort of people who had direct personal experience of DRI.

Participants in all strands of field research were recruited through gatekeepers within the service network and through advertisements on social media platforms, in addition to flyers with QR

codes where surveys could be accessed through a smartphone quickly and easily. Participation in all strands of the field research was voluntary and no participants received payment for their participation.

DRI is a topic of a particularly sensitive nature. Dr Brennan's area of expertise is in researching vulnerable groups and in the handling of sensitive information. The research was carried out in an ethically robust manner that was mindful of those participating and of the fact that many participants had experienced intimidation or in other ways may have had contact with the illicit drug market. Research methodologies were used which are consistent with best academic practice. No identifying information was collected. Special attention was paid to confidentiality and compliance with Data Protection Acts throughout the entire research process.

Findings

The research highlighted the all-encompassing culture of silence which surrounds DRI, the enduring trauma experienced by all people involved, and the resultant devastating impact on mental, emotional and physical health. Attitudes and responses to DRI vary across services and across practitioner. This hinders a consistent response across sectors in supporting people and protecting their safety and wellbeing. A collaboration between addiction services; youth services; family support services, and An Garda Síochána is vital to ensure an integrated response to DRI. We need a safe place to talk, where anonymity and safety are paramount, and where everyone feels protected and supported. This will help facilitate a more open discussion to address DRI – the voices of our community need to be heard.



“It is not something that is reported every day to us. As I said, it is something that people are ashamed of and afraid of, there is a lack of trust may be between themselves and ourselves, because, obviously, it is either themselves as a drug user who have put themselves in that position or it is a family member. Like that, it is something that we don’t see every day, but we know it is happening every day.”

Proposed training programme

From the recommendations of this research, this evidence based training will be focused on supporting community-level interventions to address the impact of DRI in the SICDATF region in line with best international best practice. The training will provide guidance and skills for practitioners from statutory, voluntary, and community organisations who are working with people experiencing the impact of drug-related debt and intimidation.

Our hope is that this training will facilitate interagency work, build fruitful relationships with the Gardai, empower people, restore community spirit, and equip service staff with the knowledge, tools and confidence to support one another and those availing of their services. We acknowledge that this will take time and require a long-term plan, however this should not deter us from our ultimate goal.



The issue is not highlighted enough to the wider community or statutory agencies. If you are not working in it, you may be very unaware of the trauma of it

The pilot DRI training programme is envisaged as an interagency, collaborative series of seminars, each focusing on the key training needs of practitioners, identified through extensive field research and consultation with community stakeholders. This new, flagship training programme is intended to bring together services for shared learning and embed a multidisciplinary, holistic approach to DRI in

the SICDATF area. Ultimately, we aim to create and support a new community of practice for professionals who are impacted by DRI in their work, where shared learning can occur and our network can be strengthened considerably in response to this issue.



We all need to sing off
the same hymn sheet –
all the services - so there is
no ambiguity between them



Please contact the sicdatf1@gmail.com
for further information.





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