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| logo | **South Dublin County** **Joint Policing Committee** |  |

**JPC's and Local Authorities and consequences of recreational drug use**

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Safer Blanchardstown, the Local Policing Forum based in Dublin 15,  was charged in 2011 by its Board of Management to look into the phenomenon of Drug Debt Intimidation. Following seminal research into this issue Safer Blanchardstown published a report entitled *Melting the Iceberg of Fear: A Collective Response* which was published in 2013 and revised in 2014. Recommendations six in the report stated ***“Develop an initiative to expose the link between casual recreational drug use, the real money and the resulting devastating serious violence. This may be achieved through an awareness raising campaign coupled with exposure of “the real money link” by all public representatives and Gardaí, in written and spoken media, as and when the opportunity arises*”**

I am happy to advise that we have now reached the stage where we have developed a campaign called THINK BEFORE YOU BUY which specifically targets recreational drug users and highlights the real money link between recreational drug use, serious violence and drug importation.

We have developed a four minute video which can be viewed at [www.thinkbeforeyoubuy.ie](http://scanmail.trustwave.com/?c=6600&d=huj_2Ew5EO9lsM-5kDEtqQzQQAqa2dp-bwlFik6q8g&s=344&u=http%3a%2f%2fwww%2ethinkbeforeyoubuy%2eie)  and associated poster (see attached) with the central message “Remember it always harms someone THINK BEFORE YOU BUY” So far we have only shown the video to a limited number of people all of which have stated that after having seen and discussed the video their notion that recreational drug use is harmless was seriously challenged. Typical comments were “I never thought of recreational drug use (i.e. smoking hash/weed) as being so harmful” “ my view of drug use has certainly been altered”

We realise that we now have a very powerful message that needs to be widely disseminated, a local campaign (say in Blanchardstown alone) would quickly become diluted by areas of close proximity (Finglas, Cabra) if these areas did not receive the same message at the same time.

As you will already be aware the function of the JPCs is set out in section 36(2) of *the Garda Síochána Act,* which states:
The joint policing committee’s function is to serve as a forum for consultations, discussions and recommendations on matters affecting the policing of the local authority’s administrative area, and in particular to (a) keep under review -
(i) the levels and patterns of crime, disorder and anti-social behaviour in that area (including the patterns and levels of misuse of alcohol and drugs) and
(ii) the factors underlying and contributing to the levels of crime, disorder and anti-social behaviour in the area,

We believe recreational drug use is the genesis of much of the underlying causes of crime, disorder, anti-social behaviour and in particular drug related criminal activity and that therefore this campaign should be of particular interest to all JPC’s.

Recently an officer from the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) visited Blanchardstown and was shown the video and was very impressed. He then invited Safer Blanchardstown to Belfast to make a short presentation on the research report and showing of the video to members of the Ards and North Down Policing and Community Safety Partnership (PCSP). The PCSP have now requested to be allowed to use the video and associated material and to promote its use across Northern Ireland.

This may provide us with an ideal opportunity to develop an all island campaign which will ensure minimal dilution of our central message. With this in mind a launch date has been selected for Thursday April 27th 2017 (venue and time TBC) .

As already stated above, we feel that this campaign needs to be widely disseminated and supported and so we are seeking endorsement from a wide variety of organisations and groups for example ICTU, IBEC, Church Groups, Youth Organisations , Gardaí, JPC’s, HSE, Sporting Bodies, Student Bodies, Schools, VFI, LVA, ICA and others seeking endorsement and requesting that they seek support of their members in displaying the poster and playing the video on loops on TV’s in waiting areas where possible.

It is vitally important that this message is not aimed at any one section or community. Recreational drug use is not only a problem in low and high income areas, for young people and older people nor are drug problems specifically associated with drug addiction. Rather recreational drug use is a problem that supports serious violence and a wide range of criminal activity across society which effects users and non-users alike and is therefore a social problem. A reduction in the number of people using illicit drugs recreationally, however slight, will provide many benefits across Irish society and beyond. Not least reducing the flow of finances to criminal gangs and cartels.

The aim of the video and poster campaign is to start a conversation within Irish society that highlights the harms associated with recreational drug use. This conversation should take place in any space that two or more people gather e.g. within families, in work, on the bus, at your local club, in your local pub, in cafés etc. In order to facilitate this conversation taking place it is vital that as wide a group of partners support and promote this campaign as possible. At present it is the cool dude who smokes weed and we need to change this to “it’s the cool dude who does **not** smoke weed”.

We will also shortly be developing a schools pack which will be available to teachers and youth leaders as a free download from our web site for those working with young people to use.

Safer Blanchardstown respectfully requests that your JPC/Local Authority pledges to support our THINK BEFORE YOU BUY campaign through partner organisations promoting the video and displaying of posters. In addition a short note or letter pledging support for the THINK BEFORE YOU BUY campaign would be very much appreciated and uploaded to our website. We will, as much as possible, endeavour to recognise and acknowledge each group/organisation pledging support for this very innovative and important campaign.

Safer Blanchardstown is also available to make a short presentation of about 20 minutes to include showing of video and Q&A to your JPC/Local Authority upon request.

Many thanks for taking the time to consider becoming a partner in this all island campaign which has the potential to reduce drug use, drug addiction, drug related crime, drug related intimidation, drug related shootings and murders, provide cost savings associated with responses to drug related crime and associated problems  while at the same time increasing quality of life for a wide cross section of Irish society.

I look forward to hearing from you in due course

Warmest regards

Philip Jennings

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