



INTIMIDATION

CityWide Conference

15.10.10



Quantitative Data

Prevalence of the Issue

- ▶ Not all families coping with drug use have experience of intimidation
- ▶ 44 family support services had worked with families experiencing debt related intimidation
- ▶ Mothers were most likely to inform a family support service of an experience of intimidation



Levels of Debt

- 30 services knew of debt related intimidation that originated from a debt worth €500 or less
- There was an even spread in the largest amount of debt that respondents were aware of. The most common amount was €10,000 – €20,000.
- The most common forms of repayment that drug users used included cash payment and/or dealing and cash payment and/or holding or hiding drugs



Types of Intimidation & Targets for Intimidation

- ▶ Verbal threats (39), physical violence (33) and damage to home/property (33) are the most common forms of intimidation used
- ▶ The family members most likely to be targeted are the mothers (35), siblings (23) & fathers (21) of drug users
- ▶ Persons working for drug dealers normally collect the debt (32)



Outcome of Intimidation

- Recurrent Cycle – 19 respondents (r)
- Intimidation stops after repayment – 17 r
- Threats are sometimes carried out – 25 r
- Threats are always carried out – 16 r
- Threats are never carried out – 2 r
- Multiple sources of finance used to repay debt (credit union loans & borrowing from friends and family)



Qualitative Data

Levels of Violence

- Threatening Behaviour
- Personal Property
- Physical Violence
- Sexual Violence or Threats of Sexual Violence



Fear in the Community

- “Threatening behaviour to any of the residents committee members who may attempt to bring up the issue. Comments made, cars and property vandalised, their kids intimidated”
- Living in the same community
“Even after paying off her son’s debt she still feels frightened when she sees the dealer”



Reporting Intimidation

- Too fearful

“The family were so terrified of the threats from the dealers they were afraid to go to the Gardaí”
- Authorities are powerless

“She was afraid to go to the police as she didn’t feel they could do anything for her”

“When he reported this to the Guards they advised him to just pay up”



Reporting Intimidation

- ▶ Mistrust in the Gardaí

“Their son by this stage had become involved in all kinds of theft to support his habit and had come to the attention of the Guards. Though the guards knew the names of the dealers, no action was taken against them”.



Women and Mothers

- ▶ Physical Violence against Women
“24 year old woman with three kids. Chair smashed over her head. Four stitches under her eye for a drug debt”
- ▶ Sexual Violence against Women
“She was trying to pay for it by selling her body and selling drugs for her dealer but she couldn’t cope with it”.



Mothers whose children use drugs

- ▶ Most likely to report
- ▶ Most likely to be targeted
- ▶ Repaying the debt
 - “The mother didn’t want her husband to know so she got a credit union loan...and is cutting back on things to pay off the loan so her husband doesn’t find out”
- ▶ Lone mothers at risk of severe financial difficulty



Housing

- Banned by local authorities

“When he is released he is not allowed to come back to my home because [name of local authority] won’t allow him to. Because of the scourge of drugs my family will never be the same again”.
- Re-location

“The mother is being threatened to pay the debt by local thugs who are close neighbours. One threat was that they would burn her home while she slept. She has requested a transfer [name of local authority]. This is not possible at present.



Housing

- ▶ Level of debt creates housing difficulties
“The mother got into debt over it and paid the debt for her son/daughter but at the cost of getting her ESB cut off and the house nearly taken off them by the courts”



Cyclical Nature

- ▶ Case studies revealed a high incidence of families caught in a cycle of debt repayment

“The family is trying to get the money together to buy some peace but fear it will happen again”



Additional Findings

- Children
- Siblings
- Partners
- Older People
- Relationships
- Residence of Drug User
- Prison/Treatment
- Negotiation
- Additional Charges
- Multiple Dealers/More than one drug using family member
- Forced Emigration
- Suicide


National Drugs Strategy

“To develop a framework to provide an appropriate response to the issue of drug related intimidation in the community.”

Action 5 – NDS 2009-16



Purpose of Strategy

- ▶ To provide a single point of contact.
 - ▶ Ensure a confidential and effective means of dealing with intimidation.
 - ▶ Provide families with sufficient support from An Garda Siochana
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Pilot Project

