

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Safety in Numbers

**An Evaluation of
Community Crime
Impact Assessment (CCIA)
Pilot Projects**

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Report of Evaluation
carried out by
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The pilot programme for the Community Crime Impact Assessment (CCIA) is an initiative under Action 4.1.40 of the National Drug Strategy 2017-2025.¹ Action 4.1.40, led by the Community and Voluntary Sector, aims to “measure the impact of drug related crime and wider public nuisance issues on communities” by developing and piloting “a Community Impact Assessment Tool in order to measure the impact of drug-related crime and wider public nuisance issues on communities”.² Community Crime Impact Assessments (CCIAs) are a community-led mechanism for identifying the impact of issues relating to antisocial behaviour and criminal activity in a particular area, informing a collaborative problem-solving approach to tackle such issues, and monitoring the effectiveness of the response through repeat assessments over time.

A steering group was established to oversee the pilot programme, which included the co-ordinator from Community Action Network, representatives from Citywide Drugs Crisis Campaign, Fatima Groups United, Safer Blanchardstown and the North Inner City Policing Forum, and an academic. The steering group oversaw:

- The development of an assessment tool and the use of it in each area
- The development and implementation of a problem-solving strategy based on the assessment
- A second assessment to measure the impact of the strategy.

Three areas were picked for the pilot primarily because Local Community Policing structures were in place and positive relationships already existed between community representatives, members of An Garda Síochána and the Local

Authorities. The pilots were initiated with the support of the Joint Policing Committee in each area and under the auspices of the relevant Local Community Policing Structures. As of September 2019, pilot projects were completed in specific areas within Dublin 8 and Dublin 15. A third pilot project which was planned for an area within Dublin 1 was not completed due to a restructuring process in North Inner City Local Policing Forum.

The CCIA is designed to put people’s experience at the heart of the process, emphasising collectivity, both in terms of presenting a collective voice on community safety issues, and also in delivering a collective, collaborative response. Allied to capturing the community voice was a desire to shift the indicators, by taking the exclusive focus off Garda measures, and also moving away from an exclusive focus on crime to one on broader social harms. Sometimes what hurts and adversely affects community safety is not a *crime* per se, but it is still a problem that impacts on people’s quality of life and that requires a problem-solving approach.

A key objective of the pilot projects and the CCIA is that the community experience would not only be accepted as evidence, but that it would prompt this problem-solving approach, with a timely, coordinated, collaborative response that is subject to analysis after implementation to examine the effectiveness of the action(s) taken. A further key objective is to track community safety over time, by asking a range of stakeholders, including representatives of An Garda Síochána and the Local Authority whether people in the community feel safer after the implementation of specific interventions.

The evaluation concludes that CCIAs can, and should, play a key role in advancing community

¹ Department of Health (2017) *Reducing Harm, Supporting Recovery A health-led response to drug and alcohol use in Ireland 2017-2025* (Dublin: Department of Health), 93, available at http://www.drugs.ie/download-Docs/2017/ReducingHarmSupportingRecovery2017_2025.pdf

² Ibid.

safety in Ireland as part of a wider package of rights-based and reparative measures to build individual and community resilience. The CCIA approach can be easily adopted by community activists across Ireland to measure perceptions of safety in their areas, and to develop collaborative, problem-solving responses to the problem(s) identified.

The evaluation has found that the two completed CCIA pilot projects have done more than merely create a mechanism within existing local policing structures for hearing, validating and bearing witness to the social and emotional wounds visited on community members. In terms of developing responses to meet community needs, the Dublin 8 and Dublin 15 pilots have demonstrated the value of a multi-agency, problem-solving, solution-oriented approach to tackling community safety issues that fosters strong, col-

laborative relationships between statutory agencies, residents and other stakeholders working within particular communities, such as drugs workers and youth groups.

Going forward, communities that are interested in conducting a CCIA should first assess the existing capacity in the area. Structures such as Local Policing Forums and Joint Policing Committees are essential for ensuring that there is accountability in the process, improving communication flow and empowering residents to take a more proactive role in enhancing the quality of life for themselves and others in their area. Indeed, regular use of the CCIA tool is likely to strengthen local structures and enhance relationships between key players, leading to more effective multi-agency responses to intractable issues.

Recommendations

- 1. The use of the CCIA has a key role to play in advancing community safety in Ireland as part of a wider package of measures to build individual and community resilience and should be brought for consideration to the NDS National Oversight Committee, chaired by the Minister with responsibility for the NDS.**
- 2. The CCIA approach can be adopted by community activists across Ireland to measure perceptions of safety in their areas, and to develop collaborative, problem-solving responses to the problem(s) identified, and wider implementation of the CCIA should be supported through the Standing Sub-Committee of the National Oversight Committee.**
- 3. The Policing Authority or its proposed successor, the Policing and Community Safety Oversight Commission, should support the development and use of community safety measurements such as the CCIA as a tool in local policing and problem solving.**
- 4. The Policing Authority or its proposed successor, the Policing and Community Safety Oversight Commission, should have a role in ensuring that crime and community safety measurements such as CCIA are robust and reliable.**
- 5. To ensure that the CCIA is robust, community activists conducting the initial assessment must ensure that a broad cross-section of reliable stakeholders provide information on community safety issues, guarding against bias in the sample and identifying whether there are any missing voices.**
- 6. In particular, any problem-solving approach to racist abuse, hate speech and discrimination should involve people from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds to gauge their sense of community safety and to ensure they are engaged in the identification of workable solutions.**

Appendix A

COMMUNITY CRIME IMPACT ASSESSMENT (CCIA)

A Template for Pilot under Strategic Objective 4.1.40 National Drugs Strategy

Including Preparatory Report Template

Rationale

CCIA is an instrument intended to give due weight to the experience of a community of living with drug-related criminality and anti-social behaviour. CCIA's could be adapted to assess the impact of other issues on a community, but the focus in this project is on drug-related issues.

CCIAs are part of the National Drug Strategy Reducing Harm Supporting Recovery 2017-2025. Strategic Action 4.1. 40 aims to:

“Measure the impact of drug related crime and wider public nuisance issues on communities”
by:

“Developing and piloting a Community Impact Assessment Tool in order to measure the impact of drug-related crime and wider public nuisance issues on communities”.

The initiative is based on Community Impact Statements, used in other jurisdictions including the UK. It was recommended by the Garda Inspectorate that such measures should be introduced to Ireland:

“In some policing jurisdictions, senior police officers can complete a Community Impact Statement on the impact particular crimes are having on the local community... It is a multi-functional tool which can be used across the justice system to enable decision makers to tailor responses to the local issues it describes”

A Community Impact Assessment tool should-

- Give a trustworthy snapshot of the nature and particularly the impact of drug-related criminality on the inhabitants of a specified locality. The tool will provide for *triangulation* in gathering data – collecting information from different sources in order to confirm the veracity of evidence
- Provide data that will be a reliable basis for planning how to tackle such issues and which parties are needed to implement such strategies.
- Monitor through repetition at reasonable intervals the effectiveness of any such strategies
- Be a resource-light and easy to use way of taking an assessment
- Have the confidence of all relevant parties to any solution to the issues

Method

There are five methods which will make up a CCIA tool

1. Speak to residents – a selection of reliable informants using a structured conversation as follows-

Ask the informant about their current and recent experience of community safety issues in the designated area. Try to get a picture of:

The nature of the activity – (public drug-dealing, intimidation, vandalism, late night parties and other public disorder, drug and drinking detritus etc.) Put it in context – is this a pattern that is new to the area, has it always been there or does it happen periodically? How does the experience connect to the drug trade?

The impact on people living nearby – (loss of sleep, general anxiety, feeling intimidated, concern for young people, damage to property, disruption to normal routines such as parking a car or walking certain routes, feeling ashamed of the area etc.)

How they or other neighbours have responded – (talking to perpetrators, complaining to authorities, sharing experiences with services, sharing experiences with neighbours, engaging positively with youth, public spaces etc.)

Their sense of how well authorities and services have responded. (Gardaí, LA, youth groups, drug services)

Their ideas about what needs to happen to address the issue.

2. Structured conversations with relevant non-residents who have a role that gives them insight and whose evidence is trustworthy – such as:

- DCC staff (estate managers, housing officers, anti-social behaviour officers, parks, maintenance,
- Others – priests, elected representatives etc, local businesses

In some cases, it may be useful to ask some of these to research further e.g. asking a Parks Council worker to note how many needles they pick up.

3. **Data research**

From PULSE and DCC complaints figures

Any other local research concurrent with the assessment (e.g.) resident's survey

4. **Unobtrusive observation**

Note any signs of current anti-social behaviour, burnt out cars, graffiti, vandalised property, fires, etc.

5. **Miscellaneous**

Current newspaper articles, other research, social media commentary etc.

Preparatory report Template

A Preliminaries

What is the **geographical boundary** of the neighbourhood to be assessed?

What is the reason for choosing this area?

What is the **time-period** for the assessment?

B Which parties are endorsing this assessment? Give the name of the person in any organisation cited.

Gardaí (mandatory)

Name

Rank

Local Authority (mandatory)

Name

Role

Community Groups/Organisations (At least one)

Name of Organisation

Name of Organisation representative

Role

Others

Name

Role

1. Resident Structured Conversations

As stated there are five methods which make up a CCIA tool:

1a How many residents will be spoken to?

1b What is the reason for choosing these residents?

1c Who will conduct conversations?

1d How will conversations be recorded?

2. Non-Resident Informants

2a Which informants will be spoken to?

2b What is the reason for choosing these informants?

2c Who will conduct conversations?

2d How will conversations be recorded?

2e Will any of these informants be asked to do research/inquiry of their own? If so which informants and what research/inquiry?

3 Data research

3a What data sources will be sought?

3b What period will be sought?

PULSE (mandatory)

How will this data be collected?

C/O Community Garda

DCC complaints (Mandatory)

How will this data be collected?

Others

How will this data be collected?

4. Unobtrusive observation

4a How will observation be conducted by researcher? E.g. Walkabout, photography

4b Planned dates and times of observation?

5. Miscellaneous

Current newspaper articles, other research, social media commentary etc.

What other data sources will be sought?

Are there any important contextual notes for the period of the assessment?

Contemporary Notes/community safety strategies at Community Safety Groups
