

THE **Echo**

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BE SMART BE SAFE DRUGS MISSION

Community response to drugs problems will raise awareness across Jobstown and Tallaght

By **Mary Dennehy**
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A PIONEERING community response to a changing drugs landscape is being launched this week in Jobstown, after a study found that 79 per cent of residents surveyed are concerned about the drug problem locally.

The Be Smart Be Safe campaign is a community response to the changing drugs climate in Jobstown and the wider Tallaght area, with the campaign connecting people to locally focused, up-to-date information and clear pathways to services.

It all started when JADD (Jobstown Assisting Drug Dependency) noticed a lack of awareness around the changing drugs landscape, with some families not knowing how or where to go for help.

Speaking with *The Echo*, Shane Hamilton, JADD co-ordinator, said: "Through our work we were noticing that a lot of families didn't know where the services were for newer drugs like crack cocaine or where to go for help with poly-drug use.

"Families are also dealing with the use of counterfeit medication drugs in the home, and there wasn't a clear pathway to services for these family members."

Mr Hamilton stressed how the changing landscape is moving beyond opiates (heroin) and cannabis to a more complex mix of substances – with numerous substances, including alcohol, now being used within the same home.

In order to discover if these difficulties were being experienced in the wider communities, JADD initiated a research project by Amarach.

As part of the research, 355 homes in the Jobstown area were canvassed.

Figures released after the research show that 79 per cent of respondents are concerned about the drug problem locally, while 36 per cent believe that drug use is the biggest social issue locally.

Some 78 per cent of respondents believe that there are not enough activities for teenagers.

While 55 per cent of respondents believe drugs have changed, a high proportion said that they would not know how to spot a family member on drugs.

The research also back JADD's experience that people 'do not know where to go or what to do', with some believing that current drug trends have not got specific services available.

There was also a 'misinformed belief' that drug services are often for heroin only.

"We need new responses locally in Jobstown and

the wider Tallaght area", Mr Hamilton said.

"We need more education in homes and better treatment options for people struggling with poly drug use.

"The Be Smart Be Safe campaign will respond to emerging trends.

"We are moving towards a local response at community level.

"There is a need for access to information, and services, around local drug trends and shifts.

"The campaign will keep families in tune and up to date . . . and will help to keep young family members safe around the new complex drugs out there."

The first phase of the campaign will include, for example, posters, leaflets and the launch of a new website.

The website will keep families updated on local shifts and trends – helping to strengthen communities through information, education and support that is relevant to them.

Advice and information on talking to children about drugs is also a key focus of the campaign – and how parents and guardians can be leaders and keep children smart about drugs.

The Be Smart Be Safe campaign is based on a local response within Jobstown.

However, all areas across Tallaght are welcome to be part of the campaign.

The official launch of the Be Smart Be Safe campaign is in Tallaght Stadium this Friday, November 8.

For further details visit www.besmartbesafe.ie.

For a list of drug projects and services visit the Tallaght Drugs and Alcohol Taskforce site, www.tdatf.ie.

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