



Safer Aberdeen Phone App Aberdeen City

Executive Summary

In a bid to reach people under the age of 30 years with important messages that would enable them to keep safe on nights out in Aberdeen City, the Community Safety Partnership (CSP) decided on a novel approach. Using a multi-agency approach they designed and implemented a Smartphone App for Android and Apple phones.

The App included important safety messages such as information and links to keep safe on nights out, use of the safe transport route and guiding people to the taxi marshals.

The App resulted in an increase in the use of street pissoirs in Aberdeen city centre, reducing street urination. People were increasingly using the App to find the taxi ranks. There was also an increase in visits to various local community safety sites, from which further safety information was accessed. Domestic abuse agencies also reported that young people found the links to domestic abuse advice helpful. The App also led to improved relationships with taxi drivers resulting in improved intelligence gathering from this community.

Over the monitoring period, there was also decrease in alcohol-related violence within Aberdeen city centre which the App may have contributed to.

Although targeted at people under the age of 30, the App has been used by other members of the community, including senior citizens who pass on the information to their grandchildren.

The development of the App has reduced the costs of marketing materials for the CSP which was previously around £2.5K per annum. The App allows them to update the information in a quick and efficient way and, once upgraded, is anticipated to cost only £3,000 per annum.

This project on the 'Innovative Media Campaign' category for the Safer Communities Awards 2013.

Project Background and Aims

In response to the increasing use of smartphones by the under thirties, Aberdeen City Community Safety Partnership (CSP) decided to develop an App which would effectively provide the target group with a database of community safety messages, links and contacts. Research supports that this unique approach to providing public information is one of the most effective ways to reach the targeted group with information and it is retained longer than the average poster, flyer or advert.

This was also deemed a more efficient and effective approach as annually, the partnership spends approximately £2.5K designing, publishing and distributing a large number of posters. Using a smartphone app avoids costs for replacing posters and other marketing materials as the App simply needs to be updated.

The main aim of the free App was to use innovative marketing techniques to reach the targeted audience to help reduce incidents of assault and provide information about sensible alcohol consumption. It also provided information about support available around domestic violence. Information was also provided on how to get home safely by encouraging the use of safe transport routes and guiding people to the taxi marshals, Street Pastors, Pissoirs and night time bus ranks. An easy to use alcohol unit calculator and information about the fire risk of cooking after consuming alcohol were also provided.

Activities

Meetings were held with community safety partners including licensees, taxi companies and bus companies during development in order to secure commitment for the project and ensure that the correct messages were provided to guarantee maximum impact.

Once the concept was agreed and partner commitment was assured, the App content was designed with input from partners using a mind map and, once designed, young people, city centre licensees and local taxi drivers provided feedback on the 'look' of the App. Data and links for the App pages were supplied by appropriate partners. Once the App had been created, partners were asked to check and confirm the accuracy and content of each page. A residents group was also kept updated about the progression of the project.

In order to promote the App, a video explaining its purpose and content was produced by Aberdeen City CSP and was launched on the Aberdeen City Council Facebook and the community safety Facebook pages and on YouTube - <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xqZg-ekrhSo>. The App was officially launched at a media presentation hosted by a Best Bar None winner, and was attended by various media outlets and partners, resulting in local newspaper and radio publicity for the App.

Impact

The App has had a notable impact since its inception, with almost 800 downloads. Comments from young people who were canvassed and comments received from users on Twitter, Facebook and YouTube have all been positive and there has been a substantial increase in the number of visits for the community safety Facebook page, an increase of 3407 between August 2011 and August 2012.

The App resulted in an increase in the use of street pissoirs in Aberdeen city centre as reported by city centre policing reports and a reduction in street urination – a 2.1% reduction in offences as well as a reduction in ASB fixed penalty notices. People were increasingly using the App to find the taxi ranks. There was also an increase in visits to various local community safety sites, from which further safety information was accessed.

Domestic abuse agencies also reported that young people found the links to domestic abuse advice helpful. The App also led to improved relationships with taxi drivers resulting in improved intelligence gathering from this community.

Over the monitoring period, there was also decrease in alcohol-related violence within Aberdeen city centre which the App may have contributed to – serious assaults from August 2011 to 2012 reduced by 23% - 65 in 2011 compared to 50 in 2012. Using SCSN's cost-benefit toolkit a saving to the public purse can be calculated: a serious assault costs approximately £24,719 and a 23% decrease in the number of assaults is a similar reduction in the cost to the public sector for a relatively small investment in the phone App.

During a Tenant's Review Group it was noted that a number of senior citizens had also accessed the App and found it a useful way to encourage their grandchildren to keep safe. Licensees, particularly those that had been part of the Best Bar None Award scheme noted that their customers had been enthused by the App and this also raised awareness of the Best Bar None Awards. The App also have a positive effect on taxi drivers who were happy to be involved in a city centre campaign which led to them being invited onto other city centre working groups.

The App also allowed the CSP to develop skills and increase their knowledge and understanding of innovative media for use in the future.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Although not formally evaluated, one of the ways in which the project was monitored was by noting the levels of downloads from websites and monitoring Twitter and Facebook to record the level of community discussion regarding the App.

User feedback regarding the App from the targeted audience was very positive, particularly as it captured their attention using innovative technology. Anecdotal evidence has also been gathered from domestic abuse partners, taxi marshals and licensees.

Lessons Learnt and Sustainability

Due to technical obstacles and some of the restrictions in place by both Apple and Android, the project from inception to delivery took longer than initially planned. In order for the App to be used successfully, all Android users need to ensure that their operating systems are up to date. If they are not then this has the potential to cause problems as the App will also not have updated to the latest version.

Longer-term the App will be updated on a seasonal basis to reflect community safety issues – for example in the summer it is planned to target students. The Police are also keen to use it for highlighting safety messages around housebreaking.

Resources

Funding: The Cost of the App development was funded through the community safety funding and the App developer provided the time free of charge from a start-up entrepreneur. £500 was required to have the App converted for use on the Android platform. The contract will be put out to tender at around £3000 annually.

Partners: Staff time from various CSP partners was provided in kind.

Outcomes

National	6. We live longer, healthier lives. 9. We live our lives safe from crime, disorder and danger. 11. We have strong, resilient and supportive communities where people take responsibility for their own actions and how they affect others.
Local	The CSP 3 year strategic assessment has a number of priorities 1. Reduce Violence including domestic violence and assaults 2. Reduce antisocial behaviour 3. Improve Fire Home Safety All have a common thread of alcohol misuse

Practice Note Information

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Areas:	
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