**Ballymun Recovery Dan Hamiltons report**

*The enemy of recovery is isolation. Ballymun Recovery Month's goal was to reach people, to connect, to be inclusive, to challenge stigma and when Ballymun ‘did recovery’ it broke down the walls of isolation.* *During one month, kicking off with the "Ballymun Does Recovery" gig, 18 events were held and people came together, each with a focus on the positive aspects of recovery, each with a different way to connect.*

*The people were connecting. The organisations were connecting. The cause was connecting with the people. Firsthand accounts of the month talk of pride, strength and hope. Public perceptions of the month inform us that it is welcomed, encouraged, wanted and needed.*

***Challenging STIGMA***

The importance of visibly challenging stigma was a key element in undermining the secrecy and hidden dangers that it represents. Role modelling, visualisations of hope and courage and the power of the voice of the individual in recovery were held up as key instruments in the achievement of challenging stigma. These interviewees presented their views of what this looked like and why the challenge was effective:

*It is important to de-stigmatise addiction. People who stand up encourage others to stand up and join the recovery journey. The projection of the recovery logo was really effective in promoting this and as Recovery Month gets stronger there is a potential to ask tougher questions, to de-stigmatise through policy changes and use the Month to become policy focused (Lord Mayor of Dublin).*

*The performers at the gig showed great courage - when you are consumed by fear you don't want to be left behind. You have to find the courage to be vulnerable, to expose your fears. The poetry aspect was a manifestation of this, the fear was real, people were shaking and they found courage**(Person in Recovery).*

*How is stigma broken if nobody stands up? People get hope from people who stand up (Person in Recovery).*

*There are bad attitudes towards recovery but the Month, the events challenged those attitudes. It is important to understand, to educate yourself, to equip yourself. Everything is related - most families are affected to some extent. It was all inclusive and gave people space to talk and time to listen. Recovery Month opened the door, showed the pathway - a road that can be travelled (Local Business Person).*

**/Celebrating Recovery & Promoting Recovery Options**

* Pride

*The gig brought out pride, the feeling of being part of something bigger, something special. People called their families to say how good it was. This was proof, you can be sober and like a band, have fun (Community Drug and Alcohol Service).*

* Connection

*The gig offered the most collective exposure, there was a large number of people, like-minded people, people looking to find recovery. It was inspirational. There was a blend of people - people in recovery and people looking to be there. The people in recovery were reaching back to connect, to support, to guide... (Anonymous).*

*The gig was sold-out. It was attended by family members, friends, professionals and other people not part of the addiction network. The audience was connected in some way with addiction and recovery (Community Drug and Alcohol Service).*

* Role-modelling

*Ballymun Recovery Month is about empowerment, highlighting the positive, giving people a stage to show what they can be and bringing recovery into the open. It was amazing that Recovery Champions stood up and talked about their experiences, this is very important to the recovery movement. This was about people power (Gig Performer).*

* Empowerment

*The concert in Axis was really emotional, it was about people, community and empowerment, it was really very spiritual. I think its dificult to recreate something that powerful (Local Business Person).*