



AWARDS FOR EXCELLENCE IN **PUBLIC RELATIONS 2022**

Best Public Information Campaign



The 'Own Your Rights' Campaign.

Campaign

Own Your Rights

Description of Campaign

In a devastating housing crisis, properties are swallowed up by vulture funds and unscrupulous landlords blight the housing market, leaving private renters feeling abandoned and helpless. Our campaign aimed to equip, empower and support renters, particularly from marginalised communities, to push back against unfair conditions and assert their legal rights.



Public Relations Consultant

We The People



Client

Threshold

Background to the Campaign

Threshold's aim is to secure a right to housing, particularly for households experiencing poverty and exclusion. We the People was tasked with devising a campaign that would raise awareness of Threshold's services and ultimately prevent renters ending up in homelessness. There was a particular focus in the campaign on hard-to-reach audiences, including migrant communities.

Threshold offers a range of advisory and advocacy services. It advises tenants through information banks on the Threshold website, a free helpline, webchat and a trained advisory team. The campaign aimed to communicate on a broad scale that Threshold offers a range of housing support services including a tenancy protection service to individuals, couples and families living in private rented accommodation who are experiencing housing problems and are at risk of homelessness.

We rigorously followed our standard methodology to develop this campaign. This involved undertaking substantial research on:

1. Role & Remit of Threshold, its internal and external challenges.
2. Market, benchmarking against best practice campaigns by similar organisations with similar remits from around the world.
3. Audiences, motivations, barriers and channels used to reach them.

Once this research was completed, we were able to distil our Insights and Implications:

1. **Activism:** a sense of activism has permeated into mainstream culture in Ireland. To ensure our campaign engaged with our millennial audience in an authentic way we needed to align our message to this zeitgeist.
2. **Storytelling:** People want to hear about other people and want to see themselves in campaigns. We worked with real people who had real renting horror stories.
3. **Global Capital:** Landlords are people too, and most are upstanding respectful people. We did not want to demonise them. The focus of people's frustrations recently has been on vulture funds and the forces of global capital that operate in the private rental market. This allowed us to be a little harder in our messaging than we might be if we were talking about individual landlords.

Statement of Objectives

We the People follows a rigorous methodology to develop comms and integrated marketing strategies. The first step in this methodology is to comprehensively understand the aims and objectives behind the brief.

According to the original brief the objective was:

- To promote Threshold's Freephone, webchat and other services, targeting audiences that need to know we exist. We need to inform them of the benefits of our services and how to access them, so that private renters who need help can avail of our services and in particular, reduce the risk of homelessness among this population.

Once we were appointed, we were able to drill down into further details on this broad objective and we set the following objectives:

- Target students, young professionals and migrant communities including Brazilian, Chinese and Polish communities in Ireland who are most at risk of falling victim to a rogue landlord.
- Increase use of Threshold's support and advice services.
- Raise awareness of the impact of Threshold's services and the benefit to the public they provide.

Specifically, the PR support for the campaign must:

- Raise awareness of the impact of Threshold's crucial work among key stakeholders in the sector as well as policymakers and politicians.
- Raise awareness of the work that Threshold is undertaking in partnership with the Department of Housing.

Programme Planning and Strategy

The insights informed and guided the development of the following strategy:

1. Real people front and centre: Our integrated through the line campaign featured real people with real stories about overcoming precarious private rented scenarios.
2. Leverage a sense of unfairness: Usually we would advise against negative campaigning if this had been a behaviour change campaign. However, given this was a public information campaign it was important to draw attention to the unfairness of the housing crisis which all of our target market could relate to.
3. Show relatable scenarios in the creative: Taking the relatability of the above even further, we wanted to spell out the exact precarious situations private renters found themselves in e.g. standards, overcrowding, unfair evictions etc.
4. Media as the message: We wanted to use activations to reach our millennial audience in the spaces where they were and where they are having conversations about the housing crisis and the frustrations they are experiencing.

Creative Concept

'Own Your Rights' was an integrated campaign that empowered our young target audience to know their rights in relation to their private tenancy and push back against unfair or illegal landlord actions. Taking the spirit of the activist that has come to define the millennial age group in Ireland, we positioned Threshold's services as the essential tool the private renter needs to protect themselves against the unfair treatment at the hands of vulture funds and global capital.

We developed audience personas based on our data:

- Young Irish contingent – young couples, students, sole renters.
- Families – single parents, families with children.
- Migrants such as Brazilian, Chinese and Eastern European people living in Ireland.

Campaign Plan

PAID TACTICS

Pillar One: Digital Advertising - Facebook, Instagram, TikTok & Google Search

We developed digital ad campaigns on Facebook, Instagram, TikTok and Snapchat and we were able to target demographics according to age, interest, language and location. We also translated digital ads into French, Mandarin, Portuguese and Polish.

Pillar Two: Washroom, Ethnic Stores, Out Of Home Advertising & Radio

Campaign featured hard-hitting, impactful advertising in out-of-home locations around Ireland, including billboards, transport network placements, digital screens and across radio. Washroom posters were a proven way to reach our millennial target audience when out socialising.

EARNED TACTICS

Pillar Three: Influencer Marketing

We developed an innovative Influencer campaign. Five key Influencers who created fresh, relatable content that appealed to our target audiences. Also, a media partnership with E-Dublin in order to reach up to 99% of Brazilian expats living in Ireland. E-Dublin is the go-to platform for information and services for Brazilian expats.

We created simple toolkits for influencers, arming them with all the tools they needed to share content about the campaign, including imagery, posts and copy guidance.

Pillar Four: Social Media Marketing

We produced graphic content based on the campaign creative plus the PR survey results:

- Identified key points and messages converted into infographics using high quality stock images.
- Designed up to five infographics.
- Customised popular culture memes with campaign content to make it relevant and shareable.

We created a series of conversational videos that told the stories of real people. We conducted a portrait series of real people facing homelessness or struggling with private renting in Ireland to visually demonstrate the power and determination of each of the featured subjects. The portraits accompanied a series of interviews with each of the subjects which delicately told their stories of overcoming challenges as private renters, but also positive experiences and practical, tangible information that resonated with our target audience.

All this content was housed in a shared social media content calendar created especially for the campaign. This content calendar plotted out the duration of the campaign, day-by-day on one axis and on the other the platforms we used organically e.g. Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, TikTok and Snapchat.

Pillar Five: Stakeholder Engagement

Consultation with the Housing/Homelessness stakeholder community was essential to the success of this campaign. We needed community organisations to support our campaign and the best way to ensure they did was to give them the opportunity to get involved early and to have their say in the development of the campaign.

We produced a Toolkit that was shared with stakeholders and partners in this campaign to encourage, equip and

excite them to support the campaign and to make it as easy as possible for them to get involved. The toolkit was emailed to the nominated contact at the partner organisation and included a brief introduction to the campaign, an explanation of its objectives and how we planned to achieve them. The most important part was a very clear sense of where the stakeholder could contribute in their own way to the success of the campaign.

The toolkit included a link to the content calendar and a link to all the assets and infographics and videos produced as part of the campaign with clear instructions for the partners.

Pillar Six: Public Relations

This comprehensive through the line campaign was underpinned by a robust PR strategy which more than just supported the above the line campaign through nuanced and contextualised conversations, the PR elements brought the campaign to life. Through a physical press event, news, features and opinion, we set down the framework for the public's understanding of our campaign and how it was talked about.

Launch Event

A key part of our campaign was the launch event which provided us with the opportunity to gather as much content as possible at the beginning of the campaign which we drip fed into media throughout the campaign.

We invited the relevant Minister, Darragh O'Brien TD, Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage, along with two key case studies to attend the content gathering event. We hosted the event in an urban city centre location which was emblematic of the housing crisis.

We gathered video interviews and hosted a photocall. We produced props and hired a drone photographer to ensure our videography of the event was as arresting as possible.

News - Survey of Tenants on Bad Landlords

To launch the campaign, we wanted to make a splash in national print and broadcast media. We conducted a survey of people in Ireland, who had rented, or were renting privately. The survey uncovered some of the most outrageous and unfair actions taken by landlords against private renters in Ireland, ensuring the launch of our campaign landed high profile news coverage and gave a nuanced context to the rationale behind the campaign. We used photography gathered from the launch event to support the news release.

Case Studies Features

We recruited and interviewed case studies of real people who have overcome precarious private rental situations for social media video content. It was important that these case studies were service users of Threshold so they could speak to the problem they experienced and the solution Threshold helped with. We worked with the same individuals to put together detailed feature packages for the larger national print media and broadcast. We offered these stories with portrait photography to the media exclusively to ensure maximum exposure in print and broadcast for the campaign.

Reaching the Regions

Further driving reach and cut-through for our campaign beyond national media was key to ensuring that potential clients in regions throughout Ireland heard about Threshold services that can help them. We drafted regionalised press releases based on the locations of our impact case studies. This tailored press release dived deeper into the story of the Threshold service user from the targeted region, driving interest for local media and increasing our opportunities for coverage.

Targeting a diverse Audience

We also aimed to target hard-to-reach audiences where they are. For example, students or migrant communities may not consume as much traditional media as other audiences, so we expanded the remit of our coverage beyond traditional channels to podcasts, Facebook Groups, University media etc.

Measurement

The total campaign reach was 17,129,771, with PR and earned influencer and social media reaching almost 7 million.

Earned:

18% of campaign budget

41% of campaign reach

Paid:

82% of campaign budget

59% of campaign reach

At launch we secured blanket coverage for the campaign across all major print, broadcast and online titles, including the front-page in the Irish Times, thejournal.ie, a large spread in Irish Daily Mail, Irish Independent, the Star and the Irish Examiner among others. The launch moment reached over 2 million people.

Huge coverage across 5 pages in both the Independent and the Herald the week after launch. This piece became a news story itself and generated a cascade of coverage in other titles and radio. We placed the CEO of Threshold on a variety of national radio talk shows and podcasts for interviews across several weeks of the campaign.

The innovative Influencer campaign featured Jennifer Collins, Julie Haynes, Father Kieran Corrigan, student-aged Conor Ryan and Fionnuala Jay. Combined their Instagram content reached 225,641 accounts. Our media partnership with EDublin included mentions on its YouTube videos, podcast, social media accounts and website, generating a reach of 229,101 amongst the Brazilian community.

The OOH reached 7.2 million, radio 270,000 per day over 4 weeks. The digital campaign secured 3,166,719 impressions. There were 39,090 click throughs to the campaign hub.

Outcomes of campaign:

- Over the course of the campaign Threshold experienced an increase in calls to freephone line of 23% on the same period in 2020. This uptick has continued into January 2022 have seen an increase of 30% on the same period in 2021.
- During the campaign Threshold saw an increase in new cases of 15.6% (November – December) on the same period in 2020. This increase has continued into 2022.
- Email contacts and requests for help increased by 17%
- In the same period Threshold prevented 905 households from entering homelessness (1,250 adults and 735 children). This represents a 16% increase on the same period in 2020.

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