Not For Human Consumption

- NI CDTF T&RN
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- WHAT’S THE STORY WITH ‘HEAD’ SHOPS
- WHAT’S THE PROBLEM WITH THE PRODUCTS
- WHAT ‘S HAPPENING?
What is a ‘Head’ Shop?

- ‘Head’ shops sell drugs paraphernalia for ‘pot’ or ‘dope’ heads; That is where the name came from
- They sell pipes and bongs; incense; herbal remedies; organic cosmetics; natural highs made from exotic plants and so-called ’legal highs’
- They usually have small brightly coloured shop fronts, with cannabis leaves and reggae images
- These shops have names like Herbal World; Cosmic Closet; Planet Love; Hemp Stop
- The first shop opened here in North Inner City in 2004
PARTY PILLS (BZPs) – The Beginning

- The Head shops started selling Party Pills about 5 years ago.
- They were sold as natural, herbal & legal highs and were said to be SAFE.
- The pills were not natural, herbal nor were they safe!
- The pills included a man-made chemical known as ‘BZP’ (Benzylpiperazine).
- After many complaints and long EU processes; ‘BZP’ was banned in Ireland in April 2009.
WHAT’S HAPPENING NOW?

- In January 2010 there were 12 ‘Head’ shops in the North Inner City; Half of these opened in last 18 months
- They are selling many so-called ‘legal high’ drugs
- Some shops are open until 4am at weekends or even 24 hours a day
- Many shops also sell over the internet and some do home deliveries
- Many shops have signs restricting under 18’s; NI CDTF has received many reports of teenagers (U18s) being sold these products
- There are up to a 100 shops in total across Ireland
WHAT’S THE PROBLEM?
WHAT ARE THESE DRUG PRODUCTS?

- There are about 70 different brand names
- They are variations of about 6 or 7 different chemical groups
- New brand names are appearing every month
- Most common current brands are: Spice; SNOW, Flake; Hurricane Charlie; SmokeXXX; Blow; Bonzai; Craic & Wildcat
Why Are People Taking These Drugs?

- People are looking for a buzz; are curious; are copying their friends; are becoming dependent
- These drugs mimic common illegal drugs: Hash; Cocaine; Speed; Ecstasy
- They are cheaper than illegal street drugs
- People believe they are safer because they are ‘not illegal’
- They are being sold and marketed as safe; legal; natural and cheap
What Are These Drugs? INCENSE? BATHSALTS? PLANTFOOD?

- The drugs are being sold as 3 main types of products
- ‘INCENSE’: Used as a leaf mixture to be smoked
- ‘BATHSALTS’: Powder that is snorted and sometimes injected
- ‘PLANTFOOD’: Tablets that are swallowed or crushed and snorted
Incense? - Smoking Mixtures

- The **Smoking Mixtures** (Incense and herbal mixtures) are like Cannabis/Hash, and they are often much stronger.
- Many of them contain chemicals called *Synthetic Cannabinoids*; a few are natural plant mixtures.
- They have *sedative effects*: Being Stoned; Relaxed; Laid back; Chatty & Cheery.
- *They have brand names like*: Smoke XXXX; Spice: Bonzai; Sky High; Aura: Sense.
- The shops also sell ready-rolled ‘joints’.
Bath Salts? - Powders

- The **Powders** (sold as Bath Salts): are like Cocaine, Amphetamine or Ecstasy, often stronger and lasting longer

- *They have empathetic effects:* Openness; Closeness; Aroused and Euphoria

- They also have *stimulant effects:* Being Alert; Energetic; Rushing; Not sleeping

- *They have brand names like:* SNOW, Hurricane Charlie; Ivory Wave; Magic & Wildcat
Plant Food? - Tablets/Pills/Capsules

- The Tablets/ Pills/ Capsules (sold as Plant Food) are like Ecstasy/E or BZP
- They have empathetic effects: Openness; Closeness; Aroused and Euphoria
- They also have stimulant effects: Being Alert; Energetic; Rushing; Not sleeping
- They have names like: Doves; Fast Layn; Space E; Smileys XXX; Lime Fantasy & Craic
In late ’09 and early in 2010, NICDTF gathered information from Community Drugs Projects and Services; Many people were looking for information & help

Common findings included:

- Effects on young people (from as young as 13 years of age)
- Effects on adult active drug users with existing health vulnerabilities
- Effects on rehabilitation progress of recovering drug users
- Effects were reported as worse when these drugs taken in combination with others, with other illegal drugs and with alcohol
- Increase distress to the families of the individuals taking these drugs
Dangers & Risks Of These Products Reported

- Not everyone suffers side-effects but quite a few people are being affected badly in a number of ways:

  - **Psychological Effects including:** Delusions; Hallucinations; Paranoia; Anxiety & Black-outs

  - **Physical Reactions including:** Lung/Breathing Illnesses; Heart Problems; Abscesses; Acute Skin Reactions/Rashes and Temporary Eyesight issues - blurring and blindness

  - **Behavioural Effects including:** Anti-social; Aggression; Violence; Criminal acts of theft, burglary & mugging
Vulnerable Groups Using These Drugs

- Some Groups of people are more vulnerable to effects of these drugs:
  - **Young People:** The drugs can affect their mental state causing aggression and black-outs; Contributing to criminal and violent behaviour
  - **Polydrug Users** (People mixing drugs and/or drink): Worse side-effects and reactions are seen where the drugs are mixed with illegal street drugs and with alcohol
Vulnerable Groups Using These Drugs

- **Problem Drug Users:**
  Additional effects on weakened health;
  Breathing problems;
  Added heart risks;
  Abscesses & skin reactions when injected

- **People with Mental Health Issues** - Effects include:
  Hearing Voices;
  Experiencing Fits;
  Obsessions; Nervousness and Depression
Buyer Beware!

- These drugs are only being produced for sale in the last number of years.
- In the short-term, there are not a lot of hard facts about them and their side effects and little is known about the longer term effects.
- These new products have not been tested under health and safety regulations for human consumption.
- There are very detailed safety regulations of products on sale in Ireland and the EU, that are for human consumption.
How Can These Drugs Be Sold ‘Legally’?

- The suppliers and sellers of the ‘head shop’ drugs are packaging, promoting and selling these substances as other types of products.
- These drugs are being sold as ‘incense’ or ‘plant food’ or ‘bath salts’ (which they are not), allowing them to by-pass the need for testing and pretending that they are ‘legal’.
- They have exploited a kind of loophole in the current law and regulations.
- These drugs are not ‘legal’.
All the products are labelled as ‘Not For Human Consumption’; The drugs are only being bought for human consumption. It is not officially permitted to sell a product that is intended to be ingested (eaten), inhaled or injected, regardless what the ‘labelling’ says as it is considered an unlicensed medicine. In Consumer Protection law, it is misrepresentation, to the public and especially to vulnerable consumers to sell a product as something that it is not; incense; plant food & bath salts.
A Changing Situation

- Action on ‘Head Shops’ was included as part of National Drugs Strategy: Dept of Health & Children has begun process of banning substances which will be in place by July 2010
- A wide variety of chemical compounds, derivatives and analogues are to be included:
  - Synthetic Cannabinoids; found in ‘SPICE’ and other ‘smokable’ mixtures/ ‘incense’ products
  - Benzylpiperazine (BZP) derivatives found in tablets/ ‘plant food’
A Changing Situation

- Mephedrone, Methylone and related Cathinones; active ingredient in Powders
- It is hoped that derivatives of Pyrovalerone and MDA which have been detected in N-RG & other products; Replacements for Mephedrone following British ban in April will be included
- GBL and 1,4 BD, Ketamine and Tapentadol; These are chemicals that are also added
- The government is now to bring ‘The Psychotropic Substances’ Bill before the Dáil in next month; This will forbid shops from selling suspect products
What Is Happening Now?

- **NATIONALLY:** Detailed Research is being carried out by National Advisory Committee on Drugs
- There is a private members’ Dáil bill on planning exemption for ‘Head Shops’
- Issues on Planning; Health & Safety; Tobacco Control; Consumer Protection; Product Liability with respect to Head Shops are being examined
- **LOCALLY:** An Garda Síochána continue to monitor the shops and their activities in North Inner City
- Dublin City Council are pursuing planning issues and retail safety regulations
**Very Recent Local Developments**

- North Inner City Drugs Task Force has also raised the issue widely; A meeting of community reps took place with Minister at beginning of March.
- Further Information sessions on dangers of products will take place over the coming months.
- Resulting from investigations by local agencies the ‘UBUZZ’ head shop on Talbot St closed last weekend.
Finally

- Following meetings by An Garda Síochána The Russian Smartshop on Talbot St; Open 24 hours/day 7 days/week; was closed down at the start of May
- Since the middle of February 6 shops have ceased trading; 3 new shops have opened; 9 shops remain open in the North Inner City
- It is likely that even if substances are made illegal and the majority of these ‘head shops’ close that there will still be on-going problems; However these products may not be so freely available to so many young people as they have been