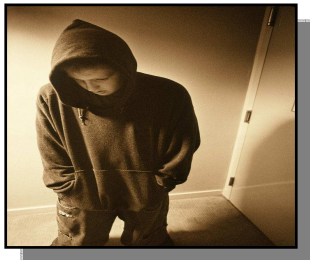


Monthly Fix

Monthly Fix is a monthly ASCERT Community Support E-Newsletter filled with up to minute information around substance misuse within our communities

Lifematters at ASCERT



Lifematters is a programme provided by the Youth Intervention Service of ASCERT. It is primarily funded by the Eastern Drugs and Alcohol Co-ordination Team, to provide a service to 8-17 year olds, who are misusing or are at risk of misusing substances.

Lifematters is delivered by ASCERT throughout the Eastern Health & Social Services Board area and within the South & East and North & West Belfast trust areas the programme is delivered by our delivery partners Opportunity Youth.

The programme aims to reduce alcohol and drug misuse amongst young people by strengthening personal skills. The programme will address issues such as team work, self esteem, anger management, coping skills, communication skills in relation to substance misuse.

The young person can, with parental consent refer themselves, or can be referred by an agency/organisation which is supporting them, or their family. Also a pre-existing group can be referred, i.e. Youth, Church, School group; if members of that group are misusing or are at risk of misusing substances. Referral forms can be obtained from the address below.

The value of participation in the programme was demonstrated in the evaluation conducted by Queens University Belfast in 2005. It showed amongst attendees a:

- 63% reduction in the use of cannabis
- 100% reduction in the use of steroids
- 75% reduction in the use of inhalants

Young people said that they really wanted to attend because it was relevant, interesting, fun, and helpful.

If you would like to arrange a meeting with us to find out more about this service, and how you might make referrals, we would be happy to meet you and your colleagues at a convenient time and location.

Contact Raymond at ASCERT
Tel: 02892604422
Email: raymond@ascert.biz

Alcohol almost as harmful as heroin



Alcohol is ranked almost as harmful as heroin in a controversial new drug classification system proposed by a team of leading scientists.

The class A drug Ecstasy, possession of which can result in a seven-year prison sentence, is placed near the bottom of the league table which lists "harm scores" for different substances.

LSD, another class A drug, is also considered relatively safe despite its powerful hallucinogenic properties.

Cannabis, recently downgraded to class C, occupies a middle position. It is rated more dangerous than Ecstasy, LSD and the dance floor drug GHB, but less harmful than tobacco.

The table, published in The Lancet medical journal, was drawn up by a team of highly respected scientists led by Professor David Nutt, from the University of Bristol, and Professor Colin Blakemore, Chief Executive of the Medical Research Council. It is intended to be a model for policy makers which is more scientifically based than the current Misuse of Drugs Act system that attaches "a, b, and c" labels to illicit drugs. The scientists identified three main factors that together determined the harmfulness of a controlled substance. These were: the physical harm to the individual user caused by the drug, the tendency of the drug to induce dependence, and the effect of the drug's use on families,

communities and society. Each of these categories was split into three sub-components, providing nine parameters of risk. Independent experts, including psychiatrists, chemists and forensic scientists, were invited to rate each of these parameters on a four-point scale. Zero denoted "no risk", 1 "some risk", 2 "moderate risk" and 3 "extreme risk".

Scores were combined to produce estimates of harm for each of 20 different drugs. Unsurprisingly, the results placed heroin at the head of the table with an overall "harm score" of 2.7, followed by cocaine which scored 2.3. But more controversially, alcohol is ranked as the fifth most dangerous drug, scoring just under 2 on the table. Tobacco is in ninth position, with a score of 1.7. Ecstasy is listed at number 18 and scores just over 1.1.

AOL Lifestyle, April 2007.

Alcohol problems will haunt Northern Ireland in future



The alarmingly high number of hospital patients whose alcohol levels are over the drink-drive limit indicates that Northern

Ireland is facing massive health problems in future. A Belfast City Hospital survey was published showing that the number of hospital patients over the drink drive limit here has risen by 113% in five years.

Kieran McCarthy, Alliance Party Assembly Member said "These statistics show an alarming increase in the number

of patients that are under the influence of high levels of alcohol. These figures indicate that unless people's attitude toward alcohol changes, Northern Ireland is facing massive health problems in future. Alcohol should be enjoyed in responsible manner to ensure that health problem for people in later life are averted."

Mr McCarthy went on to say "Another disturbing issue which can be deduced from these statistics is that hospital staff are having to deal with a large number of patients that are intoxicated. This can potentially put the safety of hospital staff at risk. We have seen too many attacks on healthcare staff in recent times and this is an issue which must be addressed as a matter of urgency."

Belfast Telegraph, May 2007

Penalty notices are erected in Colin Area

Lisburn City Council is to ensure that public notices are erected in the Colin Area to inform the public where it is illegal to consume alcohol in public.

SDLP Councillor Matthew McDermott contacted the Council after a number of the signs were removed he said "It is the responsibility of the Council to ensure that fixed penalty notices are put up in the Colin Area," he said. "They are up almost everywhere else but virtually none exist in the Colin Area. The community is trying to tackle anti-social behavior and underage drinking and at present the PSNI can't pursue someone drinking on the street as they have to point to the nearest penalty notice. The Council has

an obligation to get these up. This will give the PSNI the power to issue a fixed penalty fine and the Council will enforce it."

A spokesperson for the Council said: "Lisburn City Council has been erecting alcohol bye-law signage throughout the City Council area and will begin erecting signs regarding the Consumption of Intoxicating Liquor in Designated Places bye-law in the Dunmurry area."

Lisburn Echo May 2007

100 % compliance with new smoking law



There has been 100 per cent compliance in Lisburn with the new no smoking legislation which came into effect

on April 30. The City Council's Environmental Health Department carried out 854 business visits across the area during the first eight days of the new regulations and found them all to be smoke free.

They also found all the firms visited were complying with the signage requirements and recorded only a few issues regarding the design of external smoking shelters. Officers are now liaising with the businesses concerned to ensure their shelters meet the necessary criteria.

Assistant Director of Environmental Services Maurice Woods congratulated all businesses and workplaces within the Lisburn City Council area for embracing the new law. He said "it contributed to

cleaner air and healthier environments for everyone and in particular those people who were previously and regularly exposed to second hand smoke”.

“The Environmental Health Department will continue to monitor smoke-free compliance vigorously, taking action where required to ensure long-term success of one of the most important pieces of public health legislation in a generation,”

"The high levels of compliance reflect not only support for the legislation but the importance of the advisory work undertaken by Environmental Health staff prior to implementation of the new law."

Businesses which do not display the correct no smoking signs could face a £200 fixed penalty notice and Mr Woods said “the City Council would take proportionate and consistent enforcement action' where this was warranted”.

He said any business still requiring help and guidance should contact his Department on 9250 9250; send an e-mail to ehealth@lisburn.gov.uk in order to receive information or arrange a visit. Alternatively, they should consult the website www.spacetobreathe.org.uk

Any person wishing to report breaches of smoke-free legislation within the Lisburn City Council area can ring the smoke-free compliance line on: 0845 603 2500 (calls charged at local rates).

Lisburn Today, 17 May 2007

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“ASCERT empowers communities, families and individuals to address substance misuse.”

Update on seizures of cannabis contaminated with glass particles

1. This is an update to a previous alert, issued on January 16 this year regarding potential health harms associated with the use of cannabis that had been contaminated with glass particles.
2. Since then we have been investigating this matter further, in consultation with colleagues in the Forensic Science Service , this communication is to update you on our latest advice based on emerging information.
3. Whilst there is some evidence of a fall in the levels of glass contamination of cannabis in 2007, there is also a possibility



- that it has become less easy for users to detect it.
4. Information received from the Forensic

Science Service in April 2007, which includes analysis of seizures of cannabis, provides the following updated information:

- a. Contaminated cannabis has been in circulation since at least July 2006 and in significant numbers since at least November 2006;
- b. Contaminated cannabis is found in approximately 5-10% of herbal cannabis seizure cases examined;
- c. The proportions in seized cannabis in February

(4.6%) and March (5.9%) are lower than that in January (9.6%), which may indicate that the market is changing in response to the media and concerns of users;

- d. Glass-contaminated cannabis has now been found in most parts of the UK – but not in Wales, and with no recent seizures in Northern Ireland;
 - e. Evidence to date supports the view that the contaminated cannabis is being imported, probably from the Netherlands;
 - f. The reason for adding the glass particles remains uncertain, but it still seems likely that they are added to improve the apparent quality and weight;
 - g. Internet cannabis forums are now reporting the appearance of cannabis contaminated with much finer particles that are not easily detected as a gritty feeling;
 - h. If growers are using much smaller particles of glass beads, this could, theoretically, increase the health risk of smoking contaminated cannabis.
5. Please note that the main alert and information for patients provided in January 2007, advising to stop or reduce use, and to avoid any further use of samples where there is suspicion of actual contamination, still stands.

This document has been authorized by the Department of Health: **Gateway reference no:** 8250.

SSHCHNSTRUST 17 May, 2007

Community Support would like to hear from you

What would you like to see in Monthly Fix? If you have anything you would like to contribute to future issues of Monthly Fix or would like to promote your organisation in any way, please email Damien at: damien@ascert.biz.



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