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.
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’.
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
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.
What local Community Drugs Projects found?

- 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’.
Labelled & Sold
‘NOT FOR HUMAN CONSUMPTION’

- 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.