Not For Human Consumption

- NWI CN / NI CDTF
- 3rd June 2010
- WHAT’S THE STORY WITH ‘HEADSHOP’ HI GHS
- WHAT ARE THE RISKS
- WHAT’S HAPPENING NOW?
What is a ‘Head’ Shop?

- ‘Head’ shops sell drugs and drugs paraphernalia for ‘pot’ or ‘dope’ Heads; They started in USA in 1970s; This is where the name came from, originally

- They sell pipes cigarette papers; incense; herbal remedies; organic cosmetics; natural plant highs and so-called ‘legal highs’

- They are usually small brightly coloured shops called Nirvana, Planet Love; Hemp Stop; Up In Smoke & Little Amsterdam

- The first shop opened in North Inner City in 2004
PARTY PILLS (BZPs) – The Beginning

- ‘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.
April 2009 to April 2010?

- In January 2010 there were 12 ‘Head’ shops in the North Inner City; Half of these had opened in previous 18 months
- They were selling many so-called ‘legal high’ drugs
- Some shops were open 7 days a week and 24 hours a day
- Many shops also were selling over the internet and making home deliveries
- The shops have signs restricting under 18’s; This is not a requirement it is a voluntary code; NI CDTF received many reports of teenagers (U18s) being sold these products
- There were over a 100 shops in total across Ireland
WHAT’S THE PROBLEM? WHAT ARE THESE DRUG PRODUCTS?

- There were about 70 different brand names.
- They are variations of about 15 to 20 different chemical groups.
- New brand names were appearing every month.
- Common brands were: 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 bored; Are becoming dependent

- These drugs mimic common illegal drugs: Hash; Cocaine; Speed; Ecstasy

- They were cheaper than illegal street drugs

- People believe they are safer because they were ‘not illegal’

- They were being sold and marketed as safe; legal; natural and cheap
What Are These Drugs? INCENSE? BATHSALTS? PLANTFOOD?

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

- The **Smoking Mixtures** (Incense and herbal mixtures) are like Cannabis/Hash; They are 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 ‘Head’ shops were also selling ready-rolled ‘joints’.
Bath Salts? - Powders

- The Powders (sold as Bath Salts): are like Cocaine, Amphetamine or Ecstasy, often much stronger.
- They contain chemicals called Cathinones; or MDPV; Many also contain Caffeine; Benzocaine or Lignocaine.
- They have empathetic effects: Openness; Closeness; Euphoria.
- And they have stimulant effects: Being Alert; Energetic; Rushing; All-Night Partying.
- They have brand names like: SNOW, Blow; Magic; Wildcat Hurricane Charlie & Ivory Wave;
The Tablets/Pills/Capsules (sold as Plant Food) are like Ecstasy/E or BZP. They may contain chemicals called Cathinones; MDPV; They also may contain Caffeine; Benzocaine or Lignocaine.

They have empathetic effects: Openness; Closeness; Aroused and Euphoria.

And they have stimulant effects: Being Alert; Energetic; Rushing; All-Night Dancing.

They have names like: Doves; Fast Layn; Space E; Smileys XXX; Lime Fantasy & Craic.
What Local Community Drugs Projects found?

- From Oct ’09 many people sought information & help
  NICDTF gathered information from Drugs Projects and Services

- Common findings included:
  - Effects on teenagers (from as young as 13 years of age)
  - Effects on adult drug users with existing health vulnerabilities
  - Effects on rehabilitation of drug users in recovery; Often leading to full relapse
  - Effects were reported as worse when these drugs were taken in combination with others drugs and especially with alcohol
  - Increase distress to the families of the individuals taking these drugs
Reported Dangers & Risks Of These Products

- Not everyone suffers risky side-effects; Quite a few people are being affected badly in a number of ways:
  - Psychological Effects including: Insomnia; Delusions; Hallucinations; Paranoia; Anxiety & Black-outs
  - Physical Reactions including: Lung/Breathing Illnesses; Acute Heart Problems; Abscesses; Severe 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 seem more vulnerable to the risks of these drugs:

- **Young People**: The drugs can affect their mental state causing insomnia; 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;
  Acute heart risks;
  Abscesses & severe 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 on people’s health.
- These new products have not been tested or approved for human consumption under health and safety regulations.
- There are detailed safety regulations in Ireland to sell products for human consumption.
How Can These Drugs Be Sold ‘Legally’?

- The suppliers and sellers of the ‘Head’ shop highs 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 drug products 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 and fraud to the public and especially to vulnerable consumers to sell a product as something that it is not; INCENSE; PLANT FOOD & BATH SALTS!
May 2010 New Laws

- Action on ‘Head’ shops & highs is included as part of National Drugs Strategy: by submissions of NI CDTF
- Dept of Health & Children enacted a ban of many substances on 11th May 2010
- A wide variety of chemical compounds, derivatives and analogues are included:
  - Synthetic Cannabinoids; Found in ‘SPI CE’ and other ‘smoking’ mixtures; Up to 170 different chemical types are included
  - Benzylpiperazine (BZP) derivatives found in tablets/ ‘plant food’; Approximately 50 variations were added to banned BZP
A Changing Situation

- Included were active ingredient in Powders: Mephedrone, Methylone and 8 other Cathinones; 20 others are currently not banned.
- One Pyrovalerone; MDPV is now banned; There are many more Pyrovalerones, derivatives and analogues not currently included; Pure NRG (now on sale) contains Naphyrone.
- Other chemical groups are now being found in new products; Many are Cocaine analogues; like local anaesthetics Lignoicaine found in Dublin in new products Star Dust; Amplified; Entropy.
**What Is Happening Locally?**

*LOCALLY:*

- Issues on Planning; Health & Safety; Tobacco Control; Consumer Protection; Product Liability with respect to ‘Head’ shops are being examined and pursued with local and national agencies.

- An Garda Síochána continue to monitor the shops and their activities in North Inner City.

- Resulting from investigations by Gardai and local agencies the ‘UBUZZ’ ‘Head’ shop closed at end of April & Russian Smartshop on Talbot St; Open 24 hours/ day 7 days/ week; was closed down at the start of May.
What Else Is Happening?

- **NATIONALLY**: ~Over 250 chemical compounds were scheduled under the Misuse of Drugs Act on 11th May 2010
- **Of 102 ‘Head’ shops only 36 now remain open in Ireland**
- The government is bringing ‘the Psychotropic Substances’ Bill to the Dáil in 2010; This will forbid shops from selling suspect products without prior approval
- Research on ‘Headshop Highs’ is being carried out through National Advisory Committee on Drugs by Dublin Institute of Technology
- A National Awareness campaign will promote information on dangers & risks of these drugs; ‘ILLEGAL OR NOT’
- ‘Illegal’ Headshop Highs will be included as part of new national campaign for ‘Dial To Stop Drug Dealing Freephone’ number
- At EU level Mephedrone & other Cathinones are being investigated under EU Risk Assessment Procedures throughout Europe
North Inner City Drugs Task Force continues to gather and provide information and support on related issues.

Further Information sessions are being planned; Info will be updated on [www.nicdtf.ie](http://www.nicdtf.ie).

Info can be accessed through local projects.

Local NIC drugs projects are responding to individual family and community issues with Support; Info & Advocacy; Issues are raised by communities with NI CDTF.
Finally: A Word Of Warning!

- Since the middle of February 11 shops have ceased trading; 3 new shops have opened; As of start of June only 4 shops remain open in the North Inner City
- There has been some success tackling problems on these issues: A lot of cooperation by all working together
- It’s reported that the now the ‘illegal’ highs are available through local drug dealers in the area; ‘Head’ shops’ are selling new products not yet controlled
- The risks of these situations will continue to cause problems and require all projects to respond by sharing information and providing support
To Be Continued. . . .