



6th March 2024

Neasa Hourigan, TD
Dáil Eireann
Kildare Street
Dublin 2.

PQ8207/24

To ask the Minister for Health his plans to conduct drug harm-reduction campaigns aimed at people attending Irish music festivals this summer; his plans to roll out the use of ‘back of house’ drug checking through the use of surrender bins, which was piloted last summer; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

Dear Deputy Hourigan,

The Health Service Executive has been advised to reply directly to you in response to the above parliamentary question which you submitted to the Minister for Health for your response.

In 2022, the HSE National Social Inclusion Office launched a Safer Nightlife Programme to engage with people who use drugs specifically in festival settings. This approach involved a media campaign, the development of resources, recruiting and training volunteers and coordinating outreach teams at Life, Independence (Indie) and Electric Picnic Festivals. This also involved the piloting of ‘back of house’ drug checking at Electric Picnic and issuing of risk communications at the festival.

In 2023, the HSE Safer Nightlife Programme expanded the ‘back of house’ drug checking through surrender bins to three music festivals, alongside the provision of harm reduction outreach and a media campaign.

Building on the successes of previous years, the HSE Safer Nightlife Programme will take place again in 2024 as a multicomponent programme at several festival sites. It will involve volunteer outreach, the provision of harm reduction information, and the use of surrender bins at some sites to allow for onsite analysis of substances and the provision of real-time risk alerts where necessary. Planning has begun to identify potential sites and engage with the necessary stakeholders to facilitate the programme. Further announcements will be made once specific sites can be confirmed, which is likely to be closer to the start of the festival season. It is also intended to launch a media campaign to support the programme and provide harm reduction education.

I trust this information is of assistance to you but should you have any further queries please contact me.

Yours sincerely,

Prof Eamon Keenan
National Clinical Lead-Addiction Services
HSE National Social Inclusion Office

