

INFORMATION FOR
STAFFORDSHIRE AND
STOKE-ON-TRENT
ABOUT PSYCHOACTIVE
SUBSTANCES (LEGAL
HIGHS)

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Novel Psychoactive Substances Newsletter

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Newsletter Launch

This is the first newsletter aimed at providing up to date information about Novel Psychoactive Substances or so called 'legal highs'. It is developed by service users in recovery across Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire. The newsletter will be issued quarterly and circulated to partner agencies and GP's in Stoke on Trent and Staffordshire. It is designed to educate both professionals and members of the public about changes and trends in drug use and how to access support if necessary, whether for themselves or a loved one.

What do you mean by 'psychoactive'?

A psychoactive substance (for the purposes of the Act) is a substance which is capable of producing a psychoactive effect in a person who consumes it and is not an exempted substance. A substance causes a psychoactive effect in a person by stimulating or depressing the person's central nervous system. It affects the person's mental functioning or emotional state.

Re-Solv – community action in Stoke-on-Trent

Re-Solv is the leading UK charity working to end the misuse of solvents, gases and other 'legal' highs and to support those whose lives are affected by these substances.

In Stoke-on-Trent, Re-Solv is leading a three-year, community-based, drug prevention project funded by the Big Lottery. The goal is to bring the whole community together to raise awareness of all 'legal highs', to spread harm reduction messages and, in the long run, to prevent deaths.

Please get involved! There are FREE resilience-building sessions for schools, training for professionals and community workers, and events for parents and community groups. Local parents have also helped to develop a Guide for Parents and Carers on talking with your children about drugs – it's all at www.re-solv.org/stoke

There are also resources specifically for young people at the www.re-solv.org/healthy

For more information, please call Julie on 01785 817885 or email stoke@re-solv.org

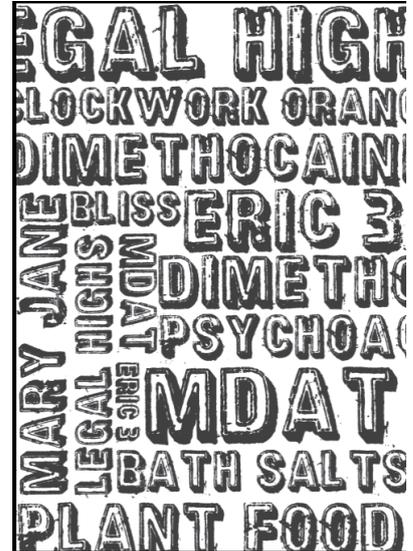
New Law on NPS 26th May 2016

The law on so called “legal highs” has changed

So-called “legal highs” (psychoactive substances) are substances which seek to mimic the effects of drugs such as cocaine and ecstasy, but are not currently controlled as class A, B, or C drugs.

It is now illegal to supply any so-called “legal highs” for human consumption. This includes selling them or giving them away for free (even to friends) when they are going to be taken for their psychoactive effects.

Importing them from abroad will also be a crime.



Police will take action where they find people committing these offences. Punishments range from a prohibition notice, which is a formal warning, to 7 years in prison.

Police and other agencies also have new powers. They will be able to stop and search people they think are supplying and they will seize and destroy so-called “legal highs” where they find them.

Drugs that are already illegal, such as cocaine, ecstasy, heroin and a number of so-called legal highs that have already been controlled as class A, B or C drugs, are not affected by these changes to the law. It is a crime to have these drugs in your possession at all. Police will continue to take action when they find these substances as before.

What made it so urgent that the law was changed?

In 2014, there were 67 deaths in England and Wales related to drug poisoning in which psychoactive substances were involved. This is a 12% increase since 2013 and has increased year on year since 2010. There were also 62 deaths in Scotland during 2014 where new psychoactive substances were implicated.

Whilst the Government has controlled over 500 substances since 2010, 18 of these 67 deaths in England and Wales in 2014 relate to psychoactive substances which are still legal and have no control in place.

“It is now illegal to supply any so called “legal highs” for human consumption”

We would like you to be able to contribute to the content of future newsletters and would value any Information you may be able to share. Information which would be useful includes any trends that you may be seeing, particular health harms or behaviours, along with good practice that you would want to share with partner agencies.



Any information received will be assessed by a small multi-agency group prior to being anonymised and added to the newsletter.

If you would like anything including in the next newsletter please email: vicky.lomas@addaction.org.uk

Focus on: Synthetic Cannabinoids – ‘mamba’ or ‘black mamba’

Locally ‘mamba’ has been adopted as a generic term to describe the group of drugs called synthetic cannabinoids. Agencies across the city are reporting particular issues with people under the influence of so called ‘Mamba’. This is a plant based material that has been sprayed with chemicals and is designed to mimic the look and effect of cannabis. Some synthetic cannabinoids are classified as a class B drug under the Misuse of Drugs Act.

Desired effects

Relaxation, euphoria, dis-inhibition, feeling energised, altered consciousness

Users/modes of use

Users: prisoners, workers subject to drug testing, students, graduates, homeless people

Modes of use: smoked in joints or inhaled through a bong, rarely ingested or snorted

Adverse effects

Acute: convulsions, paralysis, psychosis, extreme bizarre behaviour, tachycardia, aggression

Without rapid urine or blood tests to confirm the use, assessment has to be clinical, based on history where available, and recognising the clinical presentation of the person in front of you

Chronic: psychosis, aggression

Treatment

Acute: symptom-directed supportive care, may require medication for agitation, convulsions, or psychosis. If symptoms are persistent or severe, transfer to hospital may be necessary

Chronic: psychosocial and other appropriate support. Pharmacotherapy, where appropriate, for enduring symptoms

For more information visit Legalnotsafe.com

Life Story

When did you start taking Legal Highs?

"I started taking legal highs about 2 years ago starting on some called Damnation which I smoked, this gave me a mood to contemplate things but it also amplified any problems I had"

What made you take legal highs?

"I was homeless so in the mornings I would have to get my food through begging and stealing as there wasn't as many places to get food as there is now. So the whole mornings was for this, but later in the afternoon when we had nothing to do this would be the time to relieve the boredom"

What other Legal Highs have you tried?

"I then tried Black Mamba, I also smoked this it made me very open and confident, but also made me quite paranoid and the withdrawal was quite bad giving me the shakes. I also tried China White which I snorted it gave me a great buzz and I took it because I was hyperactive and it slowed me down."

How long before the drugs took affect?

"Before the true effect took place I would say about half an hour after taking it"

Did your mental health suffer?

"Yes my mental health suffered I became more paranoid and angry."

Did you know how much to take?

"I never knew how much to take, I relied on my instincts, with the Mamba I would do little tokes and focus on what I was doing, the first time I took Mamba it completely knocked me out but I got more resilient to it."

What did you think legal Highs where?

"I thought legal highs were legal to take and at first thought they were the herbal substitutes that were introduced in the 80s and 90s"

Why do you think legal highs are appealing?

"I think it is the availability, the packaging, the cheapness"

What advice would you give to people thinking of trying legal highs?

"Stick to what you know"



"The first time I took Mamba it completely knocked me out"

Websites for local support across Stoke on Trent and Staffordshire

One Recovery Newcastle:

<http://www.adsolutions.org.uk/locations/one-recovery-staffordshire-newcastle-under-lyme>

One Recovery Staffordshire:

<http://www.adsolutions.org.uk/locations/one-recovery-staffordshire-stafford>

Lifeline:

<http://www.lifeline.org.uk/contacts/stoke-drug-alcohol-services-canal-arm/>