

7th April 2025

Liam Quaide, TD
Dáil Eireann
Kildare Street
Dublin 2.

PQ 15678/25

To ask the Minister for Health if the HSE will continue its safer nightlife programme ahead of summer 2025; and if she will make a statement on the matter. -Liam Quaide

Dear Deputy Quaide,

The Health Service Executive have been requested to reply directly to your above Parliamentary Question, which you submitted to the Minister for Health for response. I have examined the matter and the following outlines the position:

The Safer Nightlife Programme was developed as a pilot project to respond to the changing drug landscape in Ireland where we observe people now using drugs across all strands of society and particularly in social settings such as pubs, night clubs and at festivals.

The young people who use drugs in nightlife settings may never have attended the traditional types of drug services we provide and therefore have been identified by the HSE as a vulnerable population at risk to the harms from drug use as well as drug market changes.

These young people may not have received any formal drug education or have never spoken with a healthcare professional about their use before. The Safer Nightlife Programme Pilot has attempted to reach these young people to provide novel interventions to overcome the current service provision gap with the aim of informing these people and help prevent harms including drug-related overdose. The project has also involved a 'back of house' drug monitoring programme where individuals could safely surrender substances to inform harm reduction interventions and provide risk communications to attendees at events if particularly potent drugs or new substances were identified.

The Safer Nightlife Programme has been piloted over 3 summers and will now be subject to research and evaluation to help identify the benefits, gaps and challenges in delivering this type of service. Over the three year period, 10 risk communications were issued at festivals as a result of the 'back of house' testing initiative and it is important to evaluate the impact of this approach.

Each year the HSE has piloted the programme at different types of events with different user communities. The HSE are currently developing plans with stakeholders to identify how this project can be improved to be more inclusive and reach a broader audience in 2025.

I hope that this information is of benefit.

Yours sincerely,

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