



30th July 2018

Deputy Louise O'Reilly, TD
Dáil Eireann
Kildare Street
Dublin 2.

Re PQ: 35321/18

To ask the Minister for Health the international model of best practice which underpins the recently announced and positive harm reduction campaigns Cocaine-Reduce the Harms and Crack-Reduce the Harms; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

Dear Deputy O'Reilly,

The Health Service Executive has 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:

Harm reduction is a set of practical strategies and ideas aimed at reducing negative consequences associated with drug use. Harm reduction incorporates a spectrum of strategies from safer use, to managed use, to abstinence, to meet drug users 'where they're at' addressing conditions of use along with the use itself. The two basic components of harm reduction are pragmatism – providing policies and services that are effective – and respecting the human rights of persons who use drugs. As far back as 1998, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Declaration on the Guiding Principles of Drug Demand Reduction which emphasises that demand reduction programmes should cover all areas of prevention, from discouraging initial use to reducing the negative health and social consequences of drug use for the individual and society as a whole. In addition, the United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime have stated that 'Harm reduction is often made an unnecessarily controversial issue as if there was a contradiction between prevention and treatment on the one hand and reducing the adverse health and social consequences of drug use on the other. This is a false dichotomy. They are complementary.' The European Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA) has stated since 2010 that Harm Reduction is now positioned as part of the mainstream policy response to drug use in Europe

Our own National Strategy, 'Reducing Harm, Supporting Recovery: a health-led response to drug and alcohol use in Ireland 2017-2025' advocates for a harm reduction approach to the misuse of drugs as



did the two previous national drug strategies stretching back to 2001. Action 1.3 in the current strategy requires us to develop harm reduction interventions targeting at risk groups. The strategy mentions previous campaigns carried out by drugs.ie and the HSE such as the awareness campaign on the use of GHB/GBL or the 'What's in the Pill' as examples of targeted campaigns. The current campaign is an extension of this previous work carried out in the area.

The decision to develop a harm reduction campaign in relation to Cocaine and Crack cocaine was initially prompted by Addiction services who had noted an increase in the numbers of people attending reporting a problem associated with cocaine and reports from specific communities of the emergence of crack cocaine as a problem. The following pieces of evidence reinforced that view

- National prevalence study conducted by the National Advisory Committee on Drugs and Alcohol (NACDA) and the Northern Ireland Public Health Information and Research Branch identified an increase in the proportion of young adults (15-34) who reported lifetime use of cocaine from 9% in 2010/11 to 11% in 2014/15
- The National Drug Treatment Reporting System compiled by the Health Research Board (HRB) in 2016 noted that cocaine remained the third most common drug reported with 12.35 of presentation reporting problem cocaine use, the highest proportion since 2010
- The most recently available drug related deaths data from 2015, again compiled by the HRB, showed a 110% increase in cocaine related deaths since 2010, from 21 in 2010 to 44 in 2015
- The EMCDDA report of 2018 reported Ireland in the top four countries across Europe for cocaine use among young adults. They also noted that availability and purity of cocaine was increasing.
- Numbers attending the Addiction services using crack cocaine had increased and a number of areas had reported increase in crack use locally both within the Dublin area and outside Dublin.

The campaign material in terms of the Harm Reduction advice and the information highlighting the harms, risks and dependencies both short term and long term, of cocaine and crack cocaine contained in the accompanying fact sheets were sourced from a number of international reports and a full list of these is attached for information. The harm reduction bullet points used on the posters were designed to engage the person with practical tips to help them reduce the harm to health. Some specific reports to mention in relation to the information used are

- Guidance for working with cocaine and crack users in Primary Care. Royal College of General Practice UK – Drug and Alcohol Misuse Training Programme
- Abdulrahim D & Bowden-Jones O, on behalf of the NEPTUNE Expert Group. Guidance on the Management of Acute and Chronic Harms of Club Drugs and Novel Psychoactive Substances. Novel Psychoactive Treatment UK Network (NEPTUNE). London, 2015
- Release UK. Safer Cocaine Guide. Available at <https://www.talkingdrugs.org/safer-drug-use-guides/cocaine1>
- EMCDDA. Safer Nightlife Toolbox (2017) <http://www.hntinfo.eu/>
- Health Research Board. Cocaine Factsheet
- A Canadian website <https://www.verywellmind.com/harm-reduction-tips-for-cocaine-users-21993> is also regularly used by practitioners in the field

At all times the HSE has been consistent in the clear message prominently displayed on the posters 'It is Safer Not to Use Drugs at All'.

"Cocaine – Reduce the Harm" website Reference list is attached at Appendix 1.

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

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Eamon Keenan". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal flourish at the end.

Dr. Eamon Keenan
National Clinical Lead – HSE Addiction Services

Appendix 1.

'Cocaine – reduce the harm' reference list

Websites utilised for information:

Crew 2000 Harm Reduction: <https://www.crew2000.org.uk/party-safer/harm-reduction.html>

Crew 2000, Cocaine: <http://www.mycrew.org.uk/drugs-information/cocaine>

CATIE, Canada, Safer Snorting: <http://www.catie.ca/en/practical-guides/hepc-in-depth/prevention-harm-reduction/safer-snorting>

CATIE, Canada, Safer crack kits: <http://www.catie.ca/en/pif/fall-2014/safer-crack-cocaine-smoking-equipment-distribution-comprehensive-best-practice-guideli>

CATIE, Canada, Safer Smoking: <http://www.catie.ca/en/practical-guides/hepc-in-depth/prevention-harm-reduction/safer-crack-smoking>

Dan 24/7 Wales, Snorting drugs: http://dan247.org.uk/Drugs_Snorting.asp

Dan 24/7 Wales, Cocaine: http://dan247.org.uk/Drugs_ReducingHarm.asp#DCocaine

Drugaid Wales, Cocaine Harm Reduction: <http://www.choices.cymru/drugs-alcohol-info/harm-reduction-2/cannabis-harm-reduction/cannabis-reducing-the-risk-of-long-term-harms/cocaine-if-you-snort/>

Drugs.ie , Cocaine: <http://www.drugs.ie/drugtypes/drug/cocaine>

Drugs.ie, Crack: http://www.drugs.ie/drugtypes/drug/crack_cocaine

DrugWise UK, Cocaine and crack: <http://www.drugwise.org.uk/cocaine-and-crack/>

DrugWise UK, Drug Link Factsheet 2005: <http://www.drugwise.org.uk/druglink-factsheet-2005-cocaethylene/>

EMCDDA, Cocaine and crack profile: <http://www.emcdda.europa.eu/publications/drug-profiles/cocaine>

EMCDDA, Levamisole as an adulterant: <http://www.emcdda.europa.eu/online/annual-report/2010/boxes/p66>

Harm Reduction Coalition, Over vamping: <http://harmreduction.org/issues/overdose-prevention/overview/stimulant-overamping-basics/>

Health Research Board, Cocaine Factsheet:

<https://www.drugsandalcohol.ie/17308/1/Cocaine%20Factsheet%20May%202018.pdf>

Jellinek, The Netherlands: <https://www.jellinek.nl/informatie-over-alcohol-drugs/cocaine/cocaine-basisinfo/risicos/>

The Loop, Club Drug Information: <https://wearetheloop.org/club-drug-info/>

The Club Drug Clinic, Cocaine: <http://clubdrugclinic.cnl.nhs.uk/club-drugs/drugs-we-work/cocaine/>

Release UK, Cocaine Safer Guide: <https://www.talkingdrugs.org/safer-drug-use-guides/cocaine1>

Release UK, Harm Reduction: <https://www.release.org.uk/basic-harm-reduction>

Unity, Netherlands, cocaine: <https://www.unity.nl/en/drug/cocaine/>

Welsh Emerging Drugs and Identification of Novel Substances (WEIDNOs Wales), snorting drugs: http://www.wedinos.org/harm_reduction_advice.html

Welsh Emerging Drugs and Identification of Novel Substances (WEIDNOS Wales) taking drugs http://www.wedinos.org/harm_reduction_advice.html

Documents

Abdulrahim D & Bowden-Jones O, on behalf of the NEPTUNE Expert Group. Guidance on the Management of Acute and Chronic Harms of Club Drugs and Novel Psychoactive Substances. Novel Psychoactive Treatment UK Network (NEPTUNE). London, 2015

Online: <http://neptune-clinical-guidance.co.uk/>

Chris Ford (2004), Guidance for working with cocaine and crack users in primary care, Royal College of General Practitioners, Drug & Alcohol Misuse Training Programme RCGP Sex, Drugs and HIV Task Group SMMGP: https://www.drugsandalcohol.ie/13634/1/RCGP_cocaine.pdf

European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (2011): The State of the drugs problem in Europe, cocaine and crack cocaine: <http://www.emcdda.europa.eu/online/annual-report/2011/cocaine/6>

European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (2001). Annual report on the state of the drugs problem in the European Union - Cocaine and 'base/crack' cocaine. http://www.emcdda.europa.eu/system/files/publications/198/sel2001_1en_69449.pdf

Peter Jatlow. MD, Cocaethylene – What is it? American Journal of Clinical Pathology.

Leonard, De Rubeis & Birkett (2006). Safer Crack Use Initiative, Evaluation Report, City of Ottawa Public Health, Canada. http://www.ohrdp.ca/wp-content/uploads/pdf/Final_Crack_Report_ES_f.pdf

European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (2001). Annual report on the state of the drugs problem in the European Union - Cocaine and 'base/crack' cocaine. http://www.emcdda.europa.eu/system/files/publications/198/sel2001_1en_69449.pdf

National Advisory Committee on Drugs, National Drugs Strategy Team. (2007) An overview of cocaine use in Ireland: II. Dublin: Stationery Office. <https://www.drugsandalcohol.ie/6149/1/3241-03406.pdf>

Drug booklets available online

Ana Liffey Drug Project, Use Your Head: <http://www.aldp.ie/resources/UseYourHeadv21.pdf>

Ana Liffey Drug Project, using coke: <http://www.aldp.ie/resources/BangingUpCoke.pdf>

Exchange Supplies, Speed Ball:

http://www.exchangesupplies.org/shopdisp_speedballs_harm_reduction_guide.php

Health Service Executive (2009) Substance Misuse and Pregnancy, An Information Booklet:

http://www.drugs.ie/downloadDocs/Substance_Misuse_in_Pregnancy.pdf

Harm Reduction Coalition, C is for cocaine (1998): <http://harmreduction.org/drugs-and-drug-users/drug-tools/c-is-for-cocaine/>

Harm Reduction Works, Crack Booklet: <http://www.harmreductionworks.org.uk/resources/pdf/hrpub3.pdf>

NHS Lothian, Working with crack cocaine users: <https://www.nhsllothian.scot.nhs.uk/Services/A-Z/PrimaryCareFacilitatorTeam/Local%20AIDs%20Sheets%20Archive/100.%20Working%20with%20crack%20cocaine%20users.pdf>

The Pennine Acute Hospitals NHS Trust (2015). Pregnant and using alcohol or drugs?

An information guide: http://www.pat.nhs.uk/downloads/patient-information-leaflets/maternity/during-pregnancy/968%20pregnant_and_using_drugs_and_alcohol.pdf

Substance.org.UK, Cocaine - A few lines: <http://substance.org.uk/publications/cocaine-a-few-lines>

Talk to Frank & Ending Alcohol Harm, Cocaethylene: <http://www.endingalcoholharm.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/Cocaethylene-leaflet.pdf>

CUT: A Guide to Adulterants, Bulking Agents and Other Contaminants Found in Illicit Drug: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/235912814_CUT_A_Guide_to_Adulterants_Bulking_Agents_and_Other_Contaminants_Found_in_Illicit_Drug

Campaigns

The Loop (MDMA powder and crystals) Crush, Dab Wait: <https://wearetheloop.org/crush-dab-wait/>

Ana Liffey Drug Project 'What's in the Powder?' Drugs.ie/whatsinthepowder

HSE Ketamine: drugs.ie/campaigns

Other:

Managing a stimulant overdose: <http://www.cmej.org.za/index.php/cmej/article/viewFile/108/43>

Treatment Improvement Protocol (TIP) Series, No. 33. Center for Substance Abuse Treatment. Rockville (MD): Online: [Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration \(US\)](http://SubstanceAbuseandMentalHealthServicesAdministration(US)); 1999.

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK64323/>

Harold E Doweiko (2009). Concepts of chemical dependency, 8th edition.
Stamford, CT, USA

Other useful sources

Dr. Adam Winstock, Global Drug Survey website – how you take your drugs (MDMA Powder and crystals)

<https://www.globaldrugsurvey.com/mdma-how-you-take-it-might-be-more-important-that-you-think/>

Global Drug Survey, First time with a pill or powder: <https://www.globaldrugsurvey.com/new-pill-or-powder/>