



Safer Student Nights Initiative - February to April 2019

#SaferStudentNights

This year the HSE has partnered with the Union of Students in Ireland (USI), to launch a harm reduction information campaign, called **#SaferStudentNights**.

Targeted at third level students, this campaign is rooted in better drug information and advice for third level students, and will run over the second semester from February to April 2019.

Over the course of the campaign, in collaboration with the Union of Students of Ireland, we are highlighting the risks people, especially students, take when using club drugs.

Upward trend in illegal drug use

Evidence* shows that there has been an upward trend in the rate of illegal drug use in Ireland. People of all ages are taking more drugs than they were a decade or so ago.

The rate of drug use among people aged 15-34 has risen by more than those aged 35-64. The most commonly used substances among the general population are alcohol, cannabis, ecstasy and cocaine, followed by amphetamines.

* (National Advisory Committee on Drugs and Alcohol. Prevalence of drug use and gambling in Ireland & drug use in Northern Ireland. Bulletin 1. Dublin: National Advisory Committee on Drugs and Alcohol, 2016).

*(European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction. (2018) Ireland, country drug report 2018. Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities).

Overarching Message

“It is always safer not to use drugs but if you do, follow harm reduction information from Drugs.ie.”

Our audience

Third level students have been identified as an at risk group by the HSE, in line with the Ireland’s National Drug Strategy: “Reducing Harm Supporting Recovery: A health-led response to drug and alcohol use in Ireland, 2017 - 2025”, which promotes harm reduction measures and supports a health-led response to drug and alcohol use in Ireland.

Why is this campaign aimed at third level students?

- They are particularly vulnerable to changing drug purity levels and new psychoactive substances.

- New users may not be aware of harm reduction measures and may never present to traditional addiction services in Ireland.

Campaign Activity

- Tailored press release issued to local and national media, as well as university publications
- Social media campaign @drugsdotie @HSELive and @TheUSI social channels
- Drugs.ie to feature key harm reduction messages
- Communication to all health service staff and article in HSE Health Matters staff magazine
- Leaflets will be provided to colleges for student events

Social Media

Drugs.ie, HSE and USI will be sharing messages through their social media channels from February to April 2019. We have provided some sample social copy below, for those who would like to post/tweet these messages during the campaign period.

How you can take part

- Please share tweets and Facebook posts from @HSELive, www.facebook.com/HSELive/, @drugsdotie/ www.facebook.com/Drugs.ie/
- and @TheUSI / www.facebook.com/USI.ie/ from Monday, 11th February until the 30th of April 2019.
- Please share messages on your social media platforms using the #SaferStudentNights hashtag.
- Look out for media coverage online and engage.

Social media themes – images are attached.

1. Start low and go slow

Sample tweets:

- Do you or your friends use drugs? Remember it is always safer not to use but if you do then start low and go slow. See the @HSELive @TheUSI #HarmReduction information for #SaferStudentNights drugs.ie/SaferStudentNights
- Start low and go slow for #SaferStudentNights. It is safer not to use drugs but if you do then take a very small test dose and wait at least 2 hours before taking more. This can help you see how you react to the drug. Find out more here drugs.ie/SaferStudentNights



2. Leaving the mixing to the DJ

Sample tweets:

- Alcohol combined with most #drugs can cause problems. It is safer not to use at all but if you do then use one substance at a time. Leave the mixing to the DJ for #SaferStudentNights. See the @HSELive and @TheUSI information and learn about drug mixtures drugs.ie/SaferStudentNights
- Have #SaferStudentNights and leave the mixing to the DJ. It is always safer not to use but if you do then use one drug at a time. For #HarmReduction advise and information about club drugs like #MDMA #Cocaine and #Ketamine go to drugs.ie/SaferStudentNights



3. What's in the powder?

Sample tweets:

- Powders could look the same but may contain different contents. Drugs from the same batch can even vary. Don't assume you know the content based on what you are sold. See the @drugsdotie @HSElive @TheUSI #HarmReduction and have #SaferStudentNights drugs.ie/SaferStudentNights
- Do you know #Whatsinthepowder? Remember - self reporting testing kits have limitations and might not detect all of the contents present in drugs. They also won't identify the purity of a substance. Always follow harm reduction information for #SaferStudentNights drugs.ie/SaferStudentNights



4. High strength = High risk

Sample tweets:

- Did you know that pills in Europe have been found to contain high dose MDMA as well as other harmful substances like Pentylone. There is no way to know just by looking at a pill. Always take a very small test dose and wait. Find out more here drugs.ie/saferstudentnights #SaferStudentNights #WhatsInAPill
- Pills could look the same and contain different contents. Drugs from the same batch can also vary. Don't assume you know the content based on what you are sold. See the @drugsdotie @HSElive @TheUSI #HarmReduction and have #SaferStudentNights drugs.ie/SaferStudentNights

Prevalence data

The most commonly used substances among the general population are alcohol, cannabis, ecstasy and cocaine, followed by amphetamines. However, other patterns have been noted among sub-populations.

MDMA

- In Ireland 4.4% of 15-34-year-olds had used MDMA in the past year. Ireland is second after the Netherlands in Europe for prevalence of this drug.
- Fourteen per cent of young adults (15-34) claimed to have tried ecstasy at least once in their lifetime, and 2% indicating current use in 2014/2015.

Cocaine

- Prevalence figures from 2014/15 show that lifetime cocaine use has increased when compared to 2010/11 data. The percentage of respondents aged 15-64 years who reported using cocaine (including crack) at some point in their lives increased from 7% to 8%.
- The proportion of young adults (15-34) who reported using cocaine in their lifetimes has also increased from 9% to 11%.
- Since 2014 there has been a steady increase in the proportion of new cases for treatment reporting cocaine as a main problem drug in Ireland, rising from a low of 297 cases in 2013 to 568 cases in 2016.

New Psychoactive Substances (NPS)

- In 2017, 51 new substances were reported for the first time (66 in 2016). By the end of 2017, the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction was monitoring more than 670 NPS, compared with around 300 monitored in 2013. Over 50% of the substances currently being monitored were still detected on Europe's drug market.
- The Eurobarometer poll 2014 indicated that the use of psychoactive drugs in Ireland among the 15-24 year age group is the highest in Europe (22% lifetime use).
- However, national prevalence data from 2014/15 shows a decline in NPS use by young adults, from 6.7% to 1.6%. Last month prevalence was less than 1% for respondents aged 15–64 years.

* (National Advisory Committee on Drugs and Alcohol. Prevalence of drug use and gambling in Ireland & drug use in Northern Ireland. Bulletin 1. Dublin: National Advisory Committee on Drugs and Alcohol, 2016)

*(European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction. (2018) European drug report 2018 trends and developments. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union)

*(TNS Political & Social. [European Commission] (2014) Flash Eurobarometer 401. Young people and drugs. Luxembourg: European Commission. 76 p)

* (Health Research Board. HRB compares the Irish drug situation with the rest of Europe. (07 Jun 2018))

* (Health Research Board. (2018) Drug Treatment in Ireland NDTRS 2010 to 2016. Dublin: Health Research Board)

Unknown contents in drugs

There is a risk that new psychoactive substances could appear in drugs without the consumer knowing. Pills that have been forensically tested in the UK have been found to contain cathinone type substances, such as a-PVP and Pentylone instead of the sought after substance MDMA. Ketamine has also been found to contain 2-FDCK, a novel dissociative aesthetic.

Contact:

Nicki Killeen, Development Worker, HSE National Office for Social Inclusion.

Nicki.killeen@hse.ie | 087 3680296

Sally Downing, Client Services, Communications Division, HSE.
Sally.Downing@hse.ie | 087 1128237

Thank you very much for your help.