

# North Inner City Drug & Alcohol Task Force

## Drug Misuse, Trends and Behaviours

### Online Survey May 2017

This report shows a summary of the results of the 6th online survey on Drugs Misuse, Trends and Behaviours undertaken by the NICDATF in May 2017.

Invitations to participate were sent to 21 NICDATF organisations. The survey was issued in May and the survey was closed on the 31<sup>st</sup> August 2017.

Thirteen surveys were completed and returned, all from separate organisations based in the NICDATF area. Eleven of these projects work mainly with adults and two mainly with children and their families.

#### KEY POINTS

- 62% of NICDATF projects responded.
- Tablets are the drugs most frequently mentioned by individuals and groups engaging with projects @ 42%.
- 85% of projects reported that poly-drug use is frequently causing problems for the individuals or groups contacting their service.
- Tablets and alcohol were the substance that featured highest among the particular combinations causing concern.
- Over 66% of combinations, where specified, causing concern involved a combination of alcohol and tablets, sometimes in conjunction with other substances.
- Almost 55% of combinations, where specified, involved 3 or more drugs.
- Tablets were cited as the drug causing the greatest issue for clients, followed closely by alcohol, Z drugs and heroin.

#### SUMMARY OF SURVEY RESULTS

**Q1. The 13 projects that completed the survey were contacted by a total of 714 individuals / groups affected by drugs or drug related issues within the last month.**

48% (345) were male

52% (369) were female

*Note: regarding concern about double-counting, respondents were requested to count each individual/group which contacted their service ONLY ONCE, regardless of how many times they made*

*contact within the month. It is possible that individuals / groups may also have contacted another service and if so, may be double counted in the overall figures.*

**Q2. The individuals / groups that most frequently contacted the projects around drugs or drug-related issue were:**

1. Adults with drug issues
2. State and Stage Agencies
3. Community Groups/members
4. Parents and Guardians

**Q3. The most common age range of individuals engaging with projects regarding drugs or drug-related issues were:**

1. 24 to 34
2. 35 to 44
3. 45 to 60
4. 12 to 23

**Q4. The 5 drugs most frequently mentioned by individuals / groups engaging with projects were:**

1. Tablets
2. Heroin
3. Alcohol
4. Cannabis
5. Methadone

**Tablets were listed as various substances/various names;**

Benzos, benzodiazepines, street benzos, Zimovanes, Zimmos and Z-drugs

**Cannabis was listed as:**

Cannabis, Weed, Grass, Hash

**Q5. We asked if poly-drug use (using 2 or more drugs at the same time) was causing problems for individuals/groups contacting the service.**

85% responded that it was causing problems either frequently or very frequently.

**We then asked if there were any particular combinations which were causing concern.**

Of the various combinations of drugs listed as causing concern: alcohol and tablets were most frequently included, either in combination with each other, or combined with other drugs.

1. 5 of the 9 combinations included alcohol
2. 8 of the 9 combinations included tablets
3. 5 of the 9 combinations included cannabis
4. 5 of 9 of the combinations included both Alcohol and Tablets
5. 4 of 9 combinations included 3 or more drugs

**Q6. We asked which drugs were causing the greatest issue for the individuals or groups contacting the service:**

1. Alcohol
2. Tablets(Benzos/Zimmos/Other tablets)
3. Heroin
4. Cannabis(weed/grass/hash/high strength cannabis)
5. Crack Cocaine
6. Cocaine

**Q7. 85% projects reported an increase in new individuals/groups contacting their service around drug-related issues during the last month.**

**Q8. We asked in what way are drugs and drug-related issues are affecting individual's behaviour, social interactions and personal life. The greatest issues reported were:**

1. Financial problems /Homelessness / Education / Family Problems
2. Crime / employment
3. Children / anti-social behaviour

**Q9. We asked in what way are drugs and drug-related issues are affecting individual's mental health. The greatest issues reported were:**

1. Addiction / Depression / Anxiety
2. Low self esteem
3. Sleeplessness / Paranoia
4. Mood Swings

**Q10. We asked in what way are drugs and drug-related issues are affecting individual's physical health. The greatest issues reported were:**

1. Withdrawal pains
2. Blood borne viruses
3. Respiratory problems/ Abscesses
4. Infections/Circulatory/Body function

**Q11. Since the last survey was completed in June 2016, have there been any new drug related trends and behaviours occurring which you are concerned about?**

As already stated the most concerning trend is the availability of street tablets.

Increased referrals from mental health services in relation to dual diagnosis. As a result many of our clients have complex needs.

The use of prescription and over the counter medication is rising and creating psychological and behavioural problems. This is generally not seen as a major issue by those attending the

service as they are 'only medication'. Inability to deal with stress or cope with general life issues is increasing the use of these drugs. This is a vicious circle which is affecting the individual and creating extreme mood swings and behavioural issues.

There has been more general talk in the area about 'chemsex' drugs and certainly the issue has surfaced more in counselling over the last year and a half.

We have noticed a huge increase in the use of tablets, weed and alcohol. Also, the drug known as "G" or GHB (Liquid ecstasy) has caused major health scares for some users e.g. coma / death.

Since June 2016 we have identified an increase on the use of "Spice" (artificial marijuana).

Rise in Lyrica and Z drugs (which were already high) has continued. Mental health issues are more regular and stability is harder to attain. Homelessness and secondary homelessness continues to be a problem - one that is becoming normalised rather than one that people get immediately concerned about.