

Ana Liffey Drug Project

MEDIA RELEASE

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Lord Mayor launches ‘What’s in the pill?’ campaign aimed at student population

The Lord Mayor, Councillor Criona Ni Dhalaigh today launched a campaign urging students to think about drug use, and in particular about party drugs like ecstasy. The ‘What’s in the Pill?’ campaign is the result of a collaboration between three Dublin Universities – DIT, TCD, and UCD and the Ana Liffey Drug Project. Resources created include posters and a factsheet, which will be distributed on campus as well as promoted on social media and via the drugs.ie website. Speaking at today’s launch in the Mansion House, the Lord Mayor said:

“I welcome this initiative, which I understand is the first time that universities and a drug service have worked together to develop drug-related resources for student populations. These resources give an important message, with a pragmatic focus – that it is always safest not to use drugs at all, but if you do choose to do so, that it is vital to have access to unbiased, evidence based information.”

Lysette Golden is Welfare Officer for DIT, one of the third level institutions involved. She said:

“The only way to make a difference is to not be afraid to talk about the sensitive subjects. Drugs are common and popular, we all know this, yet fail to talk about them openly. Through this campaign we are breaking the silence and starting this conversation.”

These sentiments were echoed by Clare O’Connor from UCD, who noted:

“With this campaign, we’re acknowledging that recreational drug use does happen around Ireland and we’re trying to put in place a harm reduction strategy in that context. We need to engage people taking drugs with information like this which could help prevent loss of life.”

Conor Clancy the Welfare Officer for Trinity College Dublin Students' Union highlighted,

“The Campaign aims to get harm reduction information out to students which has the potential to save lives and prevent harm, while also encouraging students to question drug usage and consider the harmful content in illegal drugs.”

The campaign focuses on harm reduction information related to pill taking. In 2014, there were a number of deaths across Europe related to PMA (Paramethoxyamphetamine) and PMMA (Paramethoxymethamphetamine) which were reported in the national press¹. There were also two inquests heard at Dublin Coroner’s Court into the deaths of men who died in separate incidents having taken PMA over the June bank holiday weekend in 2013.²

¹ <http://www.irishtimes.com/news/health/warning-about-pma-pmma-drug-after-six-deaths-in-ireland-1.1832118>

² <http://www.independent.ie/irish-news/courts/coroner-warns-that-pma-drug-is-highly-dangerous-30443647.html>

Tony Duffin, Director of the Ana Liffey Drug Project said,

“It’s not possible to tell what’s in a pill by sight, smell or taste. While PMA and PMMA are widely known substances which are commonly found in what is sold as ecstasy, there are many others which are not so well known. It was great to work with the universities on what is a pragmatic and helpful resource. Hopefully, it will help many students to make safer decisions.”

Minister of State with Responsibility for the National Drugs Strategy, Aodhán O ‘Ríordáin TD was also present at the launch, where he noted that the campaign was a positive example of different stakeholders working together for a common goal:

“It’s great to see positive work like this, informed by evidence. Both the universities and the Ana Liffey are to be commended for this campaign. I understand that there is an intention for them to work together again in the near future, which is exciting and welcome. Drug use is a health issue, which affects all strata of society and it is important to make sure that people have the information they need to make healthy choices.”

To download the posters and factsheet visit drugs.ie/whatsinthepill

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Information for Editors:

PMA and PMMA are stimulants with hallucinogenic effects similar to Ecstasy (MDMA), and are often found in pills that people believe to be ecstasy. However, they are toxic at lower doses than MDMA and can also take longer to take effect. After the intake of a small amount of PMA/PMMA, blood pressure and body temperature rise steeply. The effects can feel similar to MDMA, although less euphoric. Larger doses can lead to coma and death.

In 2014, the elevated risk associated with PMA/PMMA as compared to MDMA, along with the documented deaths and hospitalisations associated with these drugs led to the creation of an awareness campaign by the Ana Liffey Drug Project, which has informed this campaign.

While PMA/PMMA are well documented examples of other substances that are found in pills people believe to be MDMA, there are many other potential adulterants.

Twitter:

We would be grateful if you could use the following Tweet and the attached PNG image to link to the campaign website page:

Today [@LordMayorDublin](https://twitter.com/LordMayorDublin) launched ‘What’s in the pill?’ campaign aimed at student population <http://drugs.ie/whatsinthepill> [#WhatsInThePill](https://twitter.com/WhatsInThePill)