



Press release - February 2008

Drivers under the influence of 'illegal drugs' becoming an increasing threat to all

Following recent reports of the rise of skunk cannabis, the London Accident Prevention Council (LAPC) is concerned at the growing number of drivers under the influence of this dangerous drug which results in impaired concentration, slower reaction time, impaired steering control and co-ordination. The drug can also induce feelings of paranoia, drowsiness and disorientation.

Continuous media coverage of troubled celebrities which include Amy Winehouse and Pete Doherty, who many youngsters aspire to, only add to this problem by sending out the wrong messages.

Across the UK a growing number of drivers who are involved in road accidents have illegal drugs in their system. This frightening fact was confirmed further during January's LAPC quarterly meeting when guest speaker Jacqueline Richards, Emergency Nurse Practitioner from Queens Hospital, presented results of a casualty audit showing that drivers under the influence of drugs was a significant factor relating to Road Traffic Collisions.

Drivers under the influence of illegal drugs are becoming a more prevalent problem than drink drivers. Many drivers appear to be ignorant to the fact that drug driving has a zero tolerance and like drink driving is illegal. LAPC is calling for more stringent measures from Government to crack down on what has become an increasing threat to society.

In comparison with alcohol, it is far harder for police to detect the presence of illegal drugs and to identify which of a wide number of drugs may be involved. In view of this, Drug Influence Recognition Training (DIRT) and Field Impairment Tests (FIT) are crucial and more police officers need to be trained to conduct these tests until such time as a Home Office approved device is available for all police to use.

"Advertising and educational campaigns aimed at specific groups of drug users, similar to that run by the Scottish Road Safety Campaign must be undertaken throughout London to get this critical message across" urged Ronald Brown, LAPC Chairman.

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