Request from Thomas Kerin to HSE National Social Inclusion Office:

*“I'm looking for a breakdown of the different harm reduction programmes the funding was spent on. In a briefing for Minister Feighan, they indicate the HSE was given €100,000 in 2020 to develop a harm reduction campaign.*

* *The Department of Health, as part of the introduction of the Health Diversion Programme, is providing €100,000 in 2020 to develop a national harm reduction campaign to raise awareness of the risks associated with drug use.*
* *The HSE has conducted market research on how to best tailor its communications towards the public so as to increase the efficacy of its harm reduction information. Through this the HSE has identified a need to create new drug education resources for the general public, the development of which will begin in Q4 2020”.*

# Background: Emerging Drug Trend Harm Reduction Resources

The Drugs.ie team responds to emerging drug trends and new user groups by creating novel and culturally competent resources and social media content to raise awareness of the risks associated with changing drug trends, such as the occurrence of PMA, unknown contents and adulterants in pills and powders, high strength MDMA and new user groups using GHB/GBL as part of the sub cultural practice of chemsex. All Drugs.ie resources have been developed with input from young people or relevant services and stakeholders in Ireland. A list of campaigns can be found at www.drugs.ie/campaigns.

The aim of this work has been to relay information on drug trends with non-dependent populations who may never present to the current traditional service structures in Ireland. It is the role of Drugs.ie to provide objective information in line with best practice guidance on drug education and harm reduction. It is not within the remit of Drugs.ie to advocate for policy change or engage in policy debate.

Drugs.ie resources have focused on the short term harms and provide pragmatic steps that can be implement to reduce acute harms to health. Drugs.ie is referenced in Ireland’s National Drug Strategy ‘Reducing Harm Supporting Recovery: A health-led response to drug and alcohol use in Ireland 2017 – 2025’ as the online platform for the development and dissemination of harm reduction interventions targeting at-risk groups. This work is also incorporated in Strategic Action 1.3.11 to develop harm reduction responses aimed at nightlife cohorts such as festival goers.

In line with best practice for delivering information and health responses to people who use drugs, the Drugs.ie team expanded their emerging drug trend remit to incorporate outreach to universities and festivals, offering a non-judgmental point of contact for people to discuss drug trends and harm reduction practices.

Surveys are utilised to obtain feedback from target groups to inform the direction of emerging drug trend responses. This area of work involved sharing the ‘What are you taking?’ survey in 2019, the Sexism Free Night survey in 2020 and the EMCDDA EU Web Survey on Drugs in 2021. On-going work aims to improve information, resources and responses based on models utilised by UK and EU services.

# Budget allocation for emerging drug trend and harm reduction resource development 2020.

Emerging drug trend strategy and planning experienced delays as a result of the COVID-19 response in 2020 – 2021.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Resource** | **Link** |
| **UISCE resources**   * The translation of resources for distribution during the COVID-19 pandemic | NA |
| **Response to new benzodiazepines emerging on the Irish market –** resource development and distribution to services nationally | [www.drugs.ie/newbenzos](http://www.drugs.ie/newbenzos) |
| **Response to overdose concerns among general population of young people in collaboration with USI –** resource development and distribution to third-level settings | [www.drugs.ie/KnowingtheSigns](http://www.drugs.ie/KnowingtheSigns) |
| **Market research among the general public to gain insight on opinions on use in nightlife settings, responses and communications**  **Survey (N=511)**  **Focus group x 2** | Findings attached with mail. |
| **Image development to promote the EMCDDA EU Web Survey on Drugs** | [www.drugs.ie/survey](http://www.drugs.ie/survey) |
| **Paid posts targeting parents concerned about new drug trends** | bit.ly/33CIrxc |
| **Social media paid ads and boosted posts across Facebook and Instagram** |  |
| **Harm Reduction booklet for recreational users -** for distribution in colleges and in nightlife settings | In development |
| **Booklet for the general public** – for distribution in public locations | In development |
| **Video series with young people** | In development |
| **Video series on the ‘science of drugs’ focusing on the effects of MDMA, cannabis, cocaine and ketamine** | In development |
| **Booklet with USICE on language and stigma** | In development |

Separate to above budget allocation, the below content and presentations are also relevant to emerging drug trend and harm reduction responses:

* COVID-19 harm reduction

<https://www.drugs.ie/resources/covid/harm_reduction_advice_for_people_who_use_drugs_during_covid_19_pandemic/>

* COVID-19 harm reduction feature in Four Four Magazine for nightlife cohorts 12/01/20 <https://fourfourmag.com/drug-harm-reduction-information-in-light-of-coronavirus/>
* COVID-19 harm reduction poster for services

<https://www.drugs.ie/resources/covid/harm_reduction_advice_for_people_who_use_drugs_during_covid_19_pandemic/>

* COVID-19 alcohol poster and information for third-level students

<https://www.drugs.ie/resources/covid/alcohol/> / <https://usi.ie/covid/minding-your-mental-health-during-covid-19/alcohol-advice-for-students-during-covid-19/>

* COVID-19 Naloxone resources, information and guidance

<https://www.drugs.ie/resources/naloxone/>

* COVID-19 poster for OST in collaboration with UISCE

<https://www.drugs.ie/resources/covid/changes_to_ost/>

* COVID-19 content for people experiencing Dual Diagnosis in partnership with Dual Diagnosis Ireland and The HSE National Office for Suicide Prevention

<https://www.drugs.ie/resources/covid/dual_diagnosis/>

* COVID-19 content for people in recovery

<https://www.drugs.ie/resources/covid/drug_recovery/>

* Presentation at Nitrous Oxide Webinar for Ballymun Regional Drug and Alcohol Task Force
* <https://www.drugs.ie/features/feature/ballymun_drug_and_alcohol_task_force_webinar>
* Nitrous Oxide harm reduction

<https://www.drugs.ie/nitrous_oxide_risk_reduction/>

* Cannabis edible harm reduction

<https://www.drugs.ie/risk_reduction_for_cannabis_edible_products/>

* USI Welfare Officer training on drug trends, harm reduction and onward support: on-going
* Market research: currently underway with young people under the age of 18 and over 18 to gain their insight on the topic of cannabis and drug education needs to inform localised responses with younger populations. This work is currently incomplete.