



Consultation on Draft Misuse of Drugs Regulations

Dublin City BID submission

Dublin City Business Improvement District (BID) is a not for profit organisation charged with creating a welcoming and economically viable city environment. It represents 2,500 businesses in the city centre and works with its partners to enhance the appeal of the city centre as a place for shopping, recreation and business development by increasing footfall and improving overall trading performance. We welcome this opportunity to make a submission in relation to the proposed amendments to the misuse of drugs regulations.

Dublin City BID is a founder member and active participant of the “Better City for All” report implementation group. This group is chaired by BID Board member and Dublin City Council Area manager Charlie Lowe and features representatives from other key stakeholders including the Gardaí, Drug treatment services, Dublin Regional Homeless Executive and local drugs task forces. It is as a member of this group and as part of our overall remit to enhance the appeal of the city centre that we welcome the proposed amendments.

Dublin City Centre has been forced to deal with a serious perception problem. In all behaviour and attitude surveys carried out between 30-40% of respondents regularly highlight the perceived threat of antisocial behaviour, especially drug related antisocial behaviour. This is highlighted in the City Council’s “Your Dublin, Your Voice” survey of 3,500 Dublin citizens which found the following;

“There was very strong consensus on the worst things about Dublin with over one in three respondents (36%) of respondents describing anti-social behaviour (particularly drink and drug related behaviour, crime and safety issues) as being the worst thing about Dublin. There were over 400 mentions of drugs and drug use in the open responses. Many of the panel members feel that this has had a serious impact on the image of the city centre”.

The city centre is crucial to the success of the regional and national economy, there are 235,000 workers who earn their living in Dublin 1 and 2, while on a busy Saturday our footfall cameras would routinely record over 400,000 visitors to the city centre which can rise to over 600,000 during the peak Christmas trading period. It is vital that these visitors to the city centre feel safe and secure when they are in the city centre, we believe that the amendments recommended will help to facilitate this greater feeling of security.

From feedback provided by our members and our own observations, including the type and amount of drug litter removed from the street by our cleaning crews it is clear that the trade in benzodiazepines and z-hypnotic drugs is a significant part of the illicit city centre drug trade. Our crews are removing large amounts of discarded tablet packets, from our observations individuals are consuming benzodiazepines and z-hypnotics that they purchase in street deals by the packet before consuming large volumes of alcohol. It is crucial that the Garda Síochána be provided with the appropriate powers to take action when trade in these drugs is observed.

One of the issues giving rise to the perception that Dublin is unsafe is the street sale of prescription drugs which most members of the public assume to be harder drugs. The behaviour of those using benzodiazepines and z-hypnotics is often to appear intoxicated and disinhibited which leads to loud and boisterous behaviour. This instils a feeling of fear among the general public.

We also believe it is of great importance that the problems associated with the illicit use and sale of these products be dealt with from a public health perspective. As the "Better City for All" report notes;

"The impact of any proposed legislative change needs to be monitored. Specific treatment issues for some individuals and the need for specific treatment supports might arise as a result of this legislation."

We believe that there should be an increase in the provision of low-threshold crisis detox and stabilisation beds available to those people who are seeking an immediate solution to their addiction problems. Many of these individuals are poly-drug users and may be using benzodiazepines or z-hypnotics in conjunction with other drugs and/or alcohol. At present waiting lists and barriers to entry are a deterrent to those seeking to address their addiction issues, to ensure the effectiveness of the proposed amendments we feel that the provision of this sort of low-threshold stabilisation facility should be made available as a priority. We believe that this type of facility can be provided in a cost effective way by utilising buildings such as the emergency hostel accommodation such as Cedar House on Marlborough Place, Dublin 1. We are aware of similar services that operate very successfully at reasonable costs in similar buildings in the UK and believe that this approach should be considered for Ireland.