

Clonmel Community Conversations on Substance Use

Businesses & Commercial Interests Session

The following is a summary of contributions made by business representatives in the Community Conversation on the 18th October 2023, Hillview Sports Club, Clonmel. After introducing themselves and their business interests, participants were asked to respond to 3 broad questions.

How does substance use impact on

- **Your business?**
- **Your staff?**
- **Your customers?**
- **Clonmel town?**

Group A

- Cocaine is used anywhere.
- Users are well dressed and present well.
- All ages are involved.
- Annoy other customers
- Causing mental health issues
- Stress levels [increased]
- Open dealing
- Staff have to deal with irrational people, with violence, and be vigilant to handle situations as they arise.
- Safety concerns, fear, intimidation, loss of revenue for businesses
- Loitering
- Impact on residential areas
- Fear on the streets
- [Lack of] feeling of safety and security*
- Disrupting daily shopping – people go out of town to shop
- Begging and the impact on safety
- Reduced footfall/ leisure shopping/ night-time walking.

Group B

- Demographic is widespread
- Broad range of people involved
- Person sitting outside Penneys
- People in stable job abusing cocaine – spread through the day
- Narrow street – east Lane centre for dealing – landlord stuck with clearing up needles, etc.
- Sometimes its on the street not under cover – you can see it openly = acceptable
- Perception of it being acceptable
- Its an ongoing battle/ daily/ weekly
- Use is evident all the time
- Also difficult to detect – happens among friends
- When staff approach it [dealing & use] is shut down – there are watchers
- Spaced out persons coming in – staff are afraid
- Confrontation – often young staff have to deal with their peers
- Staff challenged by users
- Time consumption to deal with users
- Lock door of shops
- Customers – car park – intimidating – begging
- Older persons are vulnerable

- alleyways going to the car park at night & I am a young person
- [No] feeling of safety
- Weddings – large market – white collar abuse, no food eaten
- I challenge it
- We need to break the cycle – it is NOT acceptable
- When challenged – they [users and dealers] are aggressive
- Staff challenged by them
- Professional people a challenge re drug misuse
- Enforcement
- Staff are frightened – locking doors during business hours
- Patients, clients are frightened – being harassed for money
- Businesses can't move them on in case of broken windows
- Going to the toilet in the street
- Open dealing

Group C

- Laneways are hotspots – East Lane, Choices Lane, Lidl (town), bus stop @ Queen St., Narrow St. car park, Clonmel Arms, derelict spaces, Market Place
- Customers are afraid to go down town
- Intimidation in certain areas
- Image on businesses
- Open, daylight dealing
- Lack of respect for staff
- Lack of consequences for certain age groups; younger people for thieving (u13) – no consequences.
- Intimidation of staff – know the buttons to press
- Staff not trained to deal with situations

How knowledgeable do you feel you are about the substances being used?

- **the effects they have on users?**
- **how you can respond?**

Group A

- Multiple drug use
- Staff cannot police those on drugs
- Pressure for full-time management [presence]
- Don't know what drug someone may be on
- Movement in jaw, tongue, dilation of eyes, hyper
- Pubs confident about responding, small shops are not
- Heroin users – shops and in town, take prescription drugs (blister packs) as downers.
- Cocaine users – higher class leisure drugs, no obvious signs
- Presence of users ruins footfall on streets
- How does the regular customer cope?
- Too normal now – acceptance of drug use
- No fear of authority
- Awareness of different types of drugs
- Work in collaborating with other clubs, organisations.
- Normalisation: take drugs instead of alcohol – no h/o next day
- Easy access to drugs: too easy for younger kids
- Training? No authority for violence. Hands tied
- Helplessness

Group B

- Know what cannabis and cocaine are – can see white powder & smell cannabis, but v little knowledge of other substances
- Cannabis, cocaine, ecstasy, pills, prescription drugs, vapes
- Overindulgent – see it a mile off
- I can't differentiate between good time & drug use
- Some reasonable knowledge – trends from HSE & Gardaí
- Edible jellies – people hospitalised in last year
- Liquid cannabis through vapes think is prevalent
- See it in their eyes, looking at ground then later come in & can't shut them up. Drink less also
- Possessed behaviour – irrational behaviour
- Psychotic behaviour
- Begging
- Don't have tools to respond
- Afraid to deal with
- Direct approach & counselling type approach – 2 approaches
- Feel I can't respond, don't have it on premises but outside – try to move them on – cycle
- Have to protect the business, customers, staff – the whole culture has to change – like a fashion statement
- Boutique – don't respond in the shop – its not present in street – don't respond to presence
- Tired of alerting the Gardaí - it's a vicious cycle

Group C

- More knowledge/ awareness
- Unsure of substances and symptoms
- Difference between prescription drugs – legal vs illegal
- Learn/ equip to manage situations & how to respond? Can we respond?
- Change of drugs
- Fear of misjudgement
- Alcohol, weed, hash, cocaine, smack, drink, E, prescribed drugs, heroine, vapes, methadone, acid, crack, paracetamol, jellies, ecstasy, speed, mushrooms
- I know nothing about the different types of drug other than crack and hash
- Unsure of how to respond – give what they want to get them out the door – hard to do
- Speed of change – trying to keep up with emerging trends
- Develop a relationship, keep them [users] on side, treat them the same as others, recognising they are people with different backgrounds – humanising
- Keep calm
- On edge around them
- Intimidated
- Fear because of Garda presence

What gets in the way of businesses being able to respond?

Group A

- Have a chat with customer to help them understand dangers of drugs
- Legislation: insufficient – current legislation often hinders
- Health & Safety of customers your responsibility
- Feeling of “out of control” – too social acceptable
- How will this group target dealers, users on the streets?
- Anti-drugs march? Already done?
- Specialists for drug takers: specific response team

- Boots clinic
- Insufficient support for drug users?
- Only on the street for last 2 years – day and night. Lanes are well lit so out on the streets
- Pressure on business to up security re tills/ doo locks, etc.
- Lack of support system. Insufficient Garda resources
- New Garda roster needed – more hours
- Charter: wording to be considered
- Sniffer dogs (Glasgow) – used around town
- O’Connell street – same 15/20 users all the time Easy target 60% of 18-24yr olds Sat. night carrying drugs
- Zero tolerance approach by all businesses in town
- Bring today’s feedback to Tipperary JPC for action

Group B

- Upskill staff
- Tools I need to respond better – break the fashion/ cycle side of drug use
- More political input to break cycle of drug use
- I am known to be zero tolerance in drug use and that loses me business
- Its like as if 5/600 people will have to die before action is taken by politicians
- Zero tolerance is what’s required
- Maybe have a park in every town where its acceptable to use drugs?
- Need to change CULTURE where drugs are acceptable – education to 5/6 class students
- Help is there if you are addicted – that information also (needs) to be given (education)
- Name and shame – social media
- Come up with a system – in courts to deal with drug use effectively
- Branding/ sticker in window – “subscribe” to be drug free business”
- Take the person off the street – its illegal, they don’t care about us
- Community coming together would help – vigilante style is not the answer
- Fear of confronting = land myself into a legal difficulty
- Needs to be a change of view – to tackle the problem I should be protected to tackle that & be protected by legislation
- Fear of reporting as it may reflect reputationally that my premises is a free for all
- Need legal protection
- Need a plan “subscribe to be a drug free zone”= community coming together
- Drug testing of employees
- I’d like to feel confident to challenge – and be assisted (in this) legally
- Clonmel businesses subscribe to buy a drugs dog for An Garda Siochana
- Be sent to be taking on drug users
- Legislation – driving licence punched to indicate drug conviction/ drug driving etc.
- Businesses are powerful groups – we need legislation to protect ourselves
- When writing to politicians – say how many people you employ and what rates you pay, etc.
- Businesses are disillusioned – businesses have already raised this at the JPC

Group C

- What are our rights as business people? To protect our business, clients, staff, etc.? fear of the risk of being sued for taking action.
- We are aware of the lack of manpower/ resources from the Gardaí
- Education on the rights of businesses?
- Law is on their side, businesses need legislation to back up their right to refuse to serve people
- The right to refuse
- Parental responsibility is needed for the actions of young people.

- Vicious circle – parents on drugs/ alcohol end up in Court and then at Aisiri or in jail, but then back into the same dire household – how do children stand a chance?
- Those responsible should be made to pay for damage done, so that this does not affect business insurance AND so that there are clear consequences for actions
- Cultural factors – there is a perception that there is an ethnic minority running the town and driving drug use here, and that these are accommodated more than the settled community, intimidating people and not experiencing any consequences
- Get rid of ethnic status
- Stop acceptance, there's too much tolerance
- Stop begging
- Get CAB to go after bank accounts, etc.
- Social influences – social media
- Legislation needs to change as businesses feel powerless
- Working together as businesses, empowering each other & reducing isolations and fear
- Derelict buildings need to be looked at as these breed drug use
- Rights and responsibilities- lack of consequences mean that people do not take responsibility for their actions
- Council support and counselling support for businesses