



DrugScope responds to today's media reports about crystal meth

Friday 15 February 2008

Today (Friday 15 February 2008) has seen a number of media reports about the current and future situation regarding the use and production of methamphetamine (crystal meth) in the UK.

DrugScope's chief executive, Martin Barnes, has responded with the following statement:

"In January 2007, methamphetamine (crystal meth) was reclassified to a Class A drug under the Misuse of Drugs Act. The reclassification came after the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) lobbied the Government in favour of such a move.

"The motivation for the reclassification was not because the drug was already a problem in the UK. It was to enable the police to devote resources to the potential threat posed by the drug. Crystal meth is a destructive substance that we do not want to see take hold in the UK. We have seen the damage it can cause in other countries such as Australia, New Zealand and the USA.

"So far, the preemptive, precautionary strategy from the law enforcement agencies appears to have been working. All the indications are that crystal meth is still not presenting major problems to treatment or enforcement agencies.

"In today's media reports, however, it has been suggested that the UK may be at the same point as Australia was in the late 1990s. However, DrugScope would like to emphasise that the situation in Australia was different. Furthermore, it is not always the case that you can predict what will happen in one country on the basis of what has happened in another.

Some key factors that we believe played a role in the rise of crystal meth use in Australia include:

- in 2000 - 2001, we understand that the Australian enforcement agencies managed to crack down on the heroin traffic to the extent of causing a heroin drought. Unfortunately, the demand among heavy drug users was still there and many switched to crystal meth as an alternative.
- crystal meth was already in Australia in the late 1990s, but at a low level. However because the country was close to the major manufacturing regions of the Far East, it was easy to step up market infiltration when demand rose.
- unlike Australia back then, the UK already has a well-established market for a whole range of stimulant drugs. Unless something changes (e.g. some kind of major disruption to supply), those dealing in crystal meth might find it difficult to establish a market. The drug is potent and some users of other stimulants may find the strength too much to handle.

"Of course, we should not be complacent about this drug. ACPO are clearly trying to stay ahead of the game. What we can learn from experiences elsewhere is that it is important to have strict controls on key chemicals used in manufacture and to maintain vigilance about the presence of meth labs within our communities.

"We have already seen changes to the laws regarding the chemicals used to manufacture crystal meth and we understand that police are receiving training and advice on dealing with any production sites that they come across.

"DrugScope would also emphasise that many drug treatment services are not adequately geared up to provide services to the UK's existing population of amphetamine, powder cocaine and crack users, let alone any future users of crystal meth. The sector needs more investment and support to help develop the treatments available for stimulant users."

ENDS


For further information please contact Ruth Goldsmith in the DrugScope Press Office on 020 7940 7517 (07736 895563 out of hours) or at press@drugscope.org.uk

Related Links:

[BBC online news report - Crystal meth usage 'rivals crack'](#)

[Watch Martin Barnes, chief executive of DrugScope, responding to the story on BBC Breakfast this morning. Open](#)

[the video entitled 'Crystal meth drug warning', dated Friday 15 February 2008.](#)

 [DrugScope's information pages on methamphetamine \(crystal meth\)](#)

[DrugScope's information pages on methamphetamine \(crystal meth\)](#) Crystal meth, 'yaba' (ya-ba, ya ba), zip, meth, speed, go-fast, cristy, christal, tina, chalk, crank, shabu, glass, crazy medicine, L.A.

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