



Local charity co-sponsor prestigious event to tackle the rise of synthetic drugs

Local substance misuse charity Druglink are delighted to be co-sponsors at a key event on Tackling the Emerging International Threat of Synthetic Drugs. The event, hosted by Lord Manscroft, is being held at the House of Lords on Tuesday 14th May. Druglink are sponsoring the event alongside the Police, Treatment and Community Collaborative (PTACC UK), the International Society of Substance Use Professionals (ISSUP UK), The Forward Trust and The Nelson Trust, who are all coming together to address the concerning threat of Nitazenes (synthetic opioids) in the UK. Guest speakers at the prestigious event include international expert Thom Browne of The Inter-Governmental Colombo Plan who has an extensive career in drug intelligence and strategy.

Derek Heath, Chief Executive at Druglink said *"We are honoured to be co-sponsoring this event, and we are also very grateful that such an important issue is being approached with so many key services working together to tackle this potential danger. As providers of care to people struggling with substance misuse we see first-hand the effects of new substances hitting the market. Industry experts coming together to collaboratively educate people on this danger is indispensable and we are really delighted to be part of this group."*

Nitazenes are an emerging class of synthetic opioid drugs that are as potent - or several times more potent - than Fentanyl, which are commonly mixed with drugs like heroin, cocaine, and methamphetamine. Shockingly, this group of lab-produced chemicals are even more worrying than the hundreds of psychoactive substances that have cycled in and out of the headlines over the last 15 years. Nitazenes are already starting to show up in toxicology tests and coroners reports across the UK and being 500 times stronger than heroin, only a small amount is needed to potentially cause an overdose.

"Forward Trust are pleased to co-host this parliamentary event looking at the new threat posed by nitazenes. These highly dangerous chemicals have clearly now entered UK drug supply, bringing significantly increased risks of overdoses and deaths. The government and public health authorities need to respond quickly and bravely to prevent death rates rising". Mike Trace CEO The Forward Trust and former deputy drug TSAR.

Early education and understanding about these new drugs appearing on the UK market will be key, with an aim for law enforcement and public health services being ready to intervene quickly.

"We're already seeing the tragic consequences for victims, families and communities and I know the co-hosts of the event are keen to work together to find effective solutions to the challenges and problems synthetic drugs will increasingly create." John Trolan, CEO of The Nelson Trust.

According to the National Crime Agency, more than 100 deaths in the UK have now been linked to Nitazenes since summer 2023*. Medical experts say flawed data collection methods could even mean that these numbers are a significant underestimated. Last month, fifteen synthetic opioids became Class A drugs.

*BBC News

End

Contact: For more information about Druglink and how you can support us, please visit druglink.co.uk or contact Emma Kingham, Director of Communications and Development, Druglink:
e: emmakingham@druglink.ltd.uk t: 07500 989 612