



Department of

Health, Social Services and Public Safety

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AN ROINN

**Sláinte, Seirbhísí Sóisialta
agus Sábháilteachta Poiblí**

MÁNNYSTRIE O

**Poustie, Resydènter Heisin
an Fowk Siccar**

**From: Head of Inspection and Investigation
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Dear Colleagues

1. As you are aware, there has been a range of recent amendments to the Misuse of Drugs Act and the Misuse of Drugs Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2002. While many of these do impact directly on the practice of pharmacy, details are given below for your information.
2. The Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 has been amended, with effect from 23rd of December 2009, to classify so called “legal highs” as Class C controlled drugs. The substances now banned under the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 include:
 - a. chemical solvent GBL (gamma-butyrolactone) and a similar chemical – which are converted in to GHB (gamma-hydroxybutyrate) in the body and often used as ‘club drugs’ – are now controlled as Class C drugs when intended for human ingestion
 - b. synthetic cannabinoids – man-made chemicals sprayed on herbal smoking products such as ‘Spice’, which act on the body in a similar way to cannabis but can be far more potent, are now controlled as Class B drugs alongside cannabis
 - c. BZP (benzylpiperazine) and related piperazines, which are stimulants, similar to amphetamine, are now controlled as Class C drugs
 - d. 15 anabolic steroids, testosterone-like products often used by sports people and increasingly being used by the general public for their growth promoting properties are to be controlled as Class C drugs, alongside two growth promoters

The maximum penalty for supply, production and trafficking of these Class B and C drugs is 14 years imprisonment. The maximum penalty for possession of a Class B drug is five years imprisonment. The maximum penalty for possession of a Class C drug is two years imprisonment.

More information can be found on the [Home Office drugs policy website](#) and the [FRANK website](#).

3. Statutory Rules 2009 Nos. 389, 390 and 397 amend the Misuse of Drugs Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2002 as detailed below.

These Regulations insert 1-benzylpiperazine (BZP), all but two of a group of substituted piperazines and the synthetic cannabinoid agonists into Schedule 1 to the Misuse of Drugs Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2002 (“the 2002 Regulations”), save for Nabilone which is inserted into Schedule 2 to the 2002 Regulations along with Oripavine.

Two other substituted piperazines are inserted into Schedule 4 Part I to the 2002 Regulations and 15 anabolic steroids and 2 non-steroidal agents are inserted into Schedule 4 Part II.

Gamma-butyrolactone (GBL) and 1, 4-butanediol (1, 4-BD) are not inserted into any schedule. However, regulation 3, of Statutory Rule 397, makes it lawful to import, export, produce, supply, offer to supply or possess these substances except where a person does so, knowing or believing that it will be used for the purpose of human ingestion other than as a flavouring in food.

If I can be of any further assistance please contact my office at the address above.

Yours sincerely



Dr Michael Mawhinney
Head of Inspection and Investigation