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**PRESS RELEASE FROM THE CENTRE FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE**

## **‘Legal highs’ incidents up more than 150 per cent in a year, say police**

*The Centre for Social Justice has uncovered new data revealing the increasing damage ‘legal highs’ are having on society*

The number of police incidents involving ‘legal highs’ has almost trebled across England in a year, new figures obtained by the Centre for Social Justice (CSJ) reveal.

Incidents soared across forces – from 1,356 in 2013 to 3,652 in 2014 (an increase of 169 per cent). But the overall number will be much higher as 12 of England’s 39 police forces did not respond to the freedom of information request, including the Metropolitan Police.

In Greater Manchester the number increased 17-fold in two years, from six in 2012 – to 104 last year.

In West Yorkshire there was a 25-fold increase over the same period – from 13 to 324.

The CSJ has called for a robust response from the Government, including new police powers to close shops that persist in selling ‘legal highs’ (or New Psychoactive Substances).

This comes after recent CSJ analysis showed that the number of people in treatment for taking ‘legal highs’ jumped 216 per cent in England in the last five years.

The number of deaths associated with the use of ‘legal highs’ increased from 12 in 2009 to 97 in 2012 in the UK. In Scotland alone there were 113 deaths related to ‘legal highs’ in 2013.

“As well as posing worrying health risks, these figures suggest ‘legal highs’ are placing increasing pressure on public services,” said CSJ Director Christian Guy.

“It is too easy for young people to walk into high street shops and buy these drugs – many of them as dangerous and addictive as Class A substances.

“If we want to start responding to the problems caused by ‘legal highs’ we need to clamp down on those making a living out of selling them.”

The CSI said the UK has the highest number of ‘legal highs’ users amongst young people in Europe.

It has called for police and courts to be given new powers to close ‘head shops’ that sell many of the substances.

It wants the Government to implement legislation similar to a scheme run in Ireland, where authorities slashed the number of ‘head shops’ from more than 100 to less than 10 within a month.

## ENDS

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## Notes to the editor

‘Legal highs’ refer to New Psychoactive Substances, some of which have since been made illegal, but often still sold in ‘head shops’.

Responses obtained using the question: *For each of the last most recent four years for which figures are available, how many incidents have been recorded where the term ‘legal high’ has been logged?*

Police Force	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Avon & Somerset	6	5	2	11	33
Bedfordshire				4	22
Cambridgeshire	6	5	5	9	16
Cheshire	3	3	13	26	63
City of London	0	0	0	0	0
Derbyshire		0	8	27	77
Devon & Cornwall		2	2	16	88
Dorset		4	4	13	18
Durham	7	2	17	25	80
Essex	11	23	41	77	125
Gloucestershire				3	1
Greater Manchester	5	1	6	29	104
Hampshire		9	63	199	403
Hertfordshire		4	6	9	39
Lancashire	8	12	31	117	347
Leicestershire		4	10	24	65
Lincolnshire		7	57	347	820
Merseyside		3	10	20	25
Norfolk	2	20	35	93	258

North Yorkshire		3	0	2	14
Northamptonshire		2	9	13	11
Northumbria		2	2	24	108
Nottinghamshire		1	4	26	51
South Yorkshire		6	18	118	465
Thames Valley		1	2	11	54
West Mercia	7	4	9	18	
West Midlands	1	0	2	6	27
West Yorkshire		4	13	88	324
Wiltshire		2	1	1	14
<b>Total</b>		<b>56</b>	<b>128</b>	<b>368</b>	<b>1356</b>

## The Centre for Social Justice

The Centre for Social Justice (CSJ) is an independent think tank established in 2004 to put social justice at the heart of British politics. In June 2013, the CSJ was awarded UK Social Policy Think Tank of the Year at Prospect magazine's Think Tank Awards.

Last year the CSJ published Breakthrough Britain 2015, which set out almost 200 evidence-based policy recommendations to tackle poverty in the UK. This included solutions to worklessness, educational failure, addiction, family breakdown and problem debt.

The current Home Secretary Theresa May said the CSJ was the "catalyst" for the Government's Modern Slavery Bill. This legislation, which will help Britain lead a global fight against modern slavery, was a key recommendation in the CSJ's landmark 2013 report, It Happens Here.

The CSJ has published dozens of seminal papers which have shaped government policies, including Dynamic Benefits, which has led the Coalition' welfare reforms.

Further to this, the CSJ manages an Alliance of over 300 of the most effective grass roots, poverty-fighting organisations. The CSJ is able to draw upon the expertise and experience of Alliance charities for research work and media inquiries. Journalists wishing to conduct grass-roots research into social problems can be put in touch with front-line charity directors and staff.