

Drugs in the uk

Family



Topic: Drugs in the UK Lecturer: Ms Mahoney presentation Drug abuse in the United Kingdom is one of the most challenging social problems. According to Almond (2010), over 33 percent people in the country have used illegal drugs in their lifetime, with over 10% admitting to have taken the drug in 2009. Though the country has one of the most severe laws for punishing persons dealing in drugs, heroine and crack cocaine, which attract one of the most severe legal punishments, are widely used in the country. Researchers have delved on the issue of why the two drugs are widely abused in the country for long periods and most attribute it to the historical cultural factors of the British. However in addition to heroine and cocaine, cannabis, and ecstasy are other drugs widely taken by diverse demographic groups in the United Kingdom. This essay expounds on the punitive measures imposed on cocaine, ecstasy and cannabis drug offenders in United Kingdom. According to Baker et al (2001, p5) the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 is enacted in the United Kingdom to prevent the use of certain drugs for other reasons, besides medical purpose. This act controls the use of drugs that are currently used in medical practice and those that are not applied. The United Kingdom law stipulates three major crimes connected with illegal drug in the country. These crimes include possession of an illegal drug, possession with the intention of supplying to others and supply (Bottomley & Parker, p 12). In spite of these classifications, Almond (2010) notes that the penalties and definitions for the crimes are controversial because legal and police officers reserves the right to interpret in any way they deem fit. To enforce this law, police officers are empowered to detain, stop and search any person that they suspect of possessing the illegal drug. When a person is caught in possession of an illegal drug, the charge depends on the quantity of the

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drug, the type of drug, the age of the offender and whether the person is a first offender or not. The Misuse Drugs Act classifies controlled drugs into three classes, namely class A, B and C. Class A consists of drugs such as, LSD, heroine, cocaine, ecstasy and some other illegal drugs that can be injected into the body. Class B includes drugs such as amphetamines, phocodine, cannabis, methylphenidate, barbiturates and codeine. Finally, class C comprises of drugs such as minor tranquilizers, some painkillers and anabolic steroids (Bunting, & Kelly, 1998, pp23-25). Class A drugs are regarded as the most dangerous under the Misuse of Drugs Act in the United Kingdom Almond (2010). In this respect, possessing and supplying the drugs attracts the heaviest legal penalty compared with drugs in class B and C. According to Baker et al (2001, p 16), the legal penalty of possessing cocaine with intention of supplying is indefinite fine and life imprisonment. If charged for possessing cocaine, the maximum sentence is seven-year imprisonment and undefined fine (Almond, 2010). However, it depends on the amount of cocaine in your possession and the intended use. Since the police are empowered to prefer charges to any person possessing specific quantity of a controlled drug, cocaine is usually subject to more severe penalty even in very small quantities. In this regard, possessing just one gram of cocaine could result to a police officer preferring a charge of supplying. However, it depends with the region in the United Kingdom and disposition of the police officer. In some cases, police officers caution the person with the drug without arresting him or her. Baker et al (2001, p 17) noted that to avoid imprisonment, the accused people normally enroll in a court approved cocaine rehabilitation program. However, people caught with cocaine normally spend an average of three years in prison and a fine of about ? 167

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(Almond, 2010). Ecstasy is categorized in class A and the penalty is as severe as in the case of cocaine. The minimum quantity of ecstasy that could result to supply charge preferred against a person is three pills. The penalty for possessing and supplying is equivalent with that of cocaine. In addition, it depends on police investigations and their conviction about the severity of a given case. However, people caught with ecstasy spend an average of 2 years in prison and a fine of about ? 173(Almond, 2010). According to Baker et al (2001), cannabis, is the most popular controlled drug in the UK and it belongs to class B of illegal drugs. In United Kingdom, Almond (2010) noted that it causes imprisonment of more people than all other drugs combined. Under normal circumstances, the police do not prefer a charge to a person caught possessing the drug though a minimum of 2 oz could result to supply charge. However, a maximum of 14 years with an option of fine is the standard penalty for supplying cannabis in UK and a maximum of 5 years with an option of fine for possessing the drug. Under normal circumstances, people convicted with the offence spend an average period of 10 months in prison and a fine of ? 87(Almond, 2010). References Almond, Paul. " Drug penalties: where you stand officially and unofficially". The Good Drugs Guide. 5 Jan 2010. 28 Feb 2011. Retrieved from <http://www.thegooddrugsguide.com/info/penalties.htm> Baker, P., et al. " Drug misuse declared in 2000: Results from British Crime Survey". Home Office Research Study, 224, (2001): pp 5-17. Bottomley, T. & Parker, H. ' Crack cocaine and drug-crime careers'. Occasional Paper Series, Home Office, 3. 7 (1996): pp 11-21. Bunting, S., & Kelly, S. Trends in Drug Related Suicides in England and Wales. London: Oxford University Press, 1998.