

alcohol services for the community (asc) Press Release (26.05.11)

Whilst alcohol remains our nation's favourite drug, more and more people are choosing to mix this legal drug with illegal drugs, especially cocaine. In fact a recent BBC3 documentary¹ highlighted that 61% of people who take cocaine use this drug alongside alcohol.

Whilst the majority of these view alcohol and cocaine as natural, recreational (albeit one illegal) partners, few are aware of the impact that these two substances *combined* have on the body, in particular the heart.

When alcohol and cocaine are taken together they form a highly toxic third substance which is called cocaethylene. Cocaethylene:

- causes the effects to last longer (by blocking the reuptake of dopamine in the brain)
- increases the levels of cocaine in the blood, which is cleared more slowly
- raises the heart rate by approximately 33 beats per minute (nearly 3 x higher than when taking cocaine alone)
- significantly increases the risk of heart attack and other possible health effects
- has been associated with a 25-fold increase in sudden deaths²

In order to raise awareness of the dangers of mixing alcohol and cocaine **alcohol services for the community (asc)** are launching a new poster: "Where do you draw the line?" (attached)

Sarah Loftus, Safer Drinking Team Manager at **asc** comments: "Many people simply see cocaine as a "pick-me-up" with their pint and one which enables them to party for longer. In fact, a recent study found that ½ of all alcohol and cocaine users drank for more than 12 hours and a third for more than 24 hours.¹ But this prolonged drinking increases the strain on the heart, as does the cocaethylene. Many young people dismiss the dangers of alcohol and drugs, believing that damage is only caused by long-term use, but combining alcohol and cocaine could be life threatening, even to a young, fit, and healthy person".

To order free copies of this posters contact training@alcohol-services.co.uk.

References:

¹ "How drugs work", BBC3 (Mixmag survey)

² "Cocaethylene: responding to combined alcohol and cocaine use", AERC

Notes for Editors:

alcohol services for the community (asc) aims to promote a healthier lifestyle without reliance on alcohol or other drugs.

asc comprises the Safer Drinking Team (prevention), the James Kingham Project (jkp), our adult treatment service and PUKE (Prevention Understanding Knowledge Education), **asc's** dedicated young people's service. Visit our website (www.alcohol-services.co.uk) for more details.

For further information about this campaign or our organisation contact Sarah Loftus, Safer Drinking Team Manager at **alcohol services for the community** on 01582 506305 or by email at sarah.loftus@alcohol-services.co.uk.