

'White cider more deadly than heroin' says homeless charity boss

White cider and other super-strength drinks are killing more homeless people than heroin and crack, according to the director of a charity.

"Super-strength drinks are a breed apart. The cheap and strong white ciders are a problem drink which have devastated and cut short the lives of tens of thousands of people since they emerged onto the marketplace," said Jeremy Swain, Chief Executive of Thames Reach.

"Astonishingly, they are killing more homeless people than heroin or crack cocaine. It's time for the government and drinks industry to act so that they disappear from the country's supermarket and off-licence shelves."

Swain said 50 of his service users had died over the last three years from drinking super strength drinks, more so than from illegal drugs. He added that many service users also suffered from liver, brain and heart problems as a result of the "relatively recent" super-strength drink phenomenon.

His comments come in the wake of a report commissioned by Alcohol Concern

which reveals how the drinks industry is using cheap culinary apple concentrate – often imported from abroad to make white ciders – whilst benefiting from the tax breaks and low duty intended to boost the development of traditional cider apple



Bad apple: white ciders have caused deaths amongst street drinkers

orchards. This allows the drinks industry to produce a potent 7.5 per cent drink which is cheaper than bottled water or lemonade yet still extremely profitable. The report, *White ciders and street drinkers* says products such as Carbon White, White Ace and Frosty Jack's, all of which are 7.5 per cent, have a lower price per unit than lemonade or water. K Cider, which is produced for the C&C Group Plc – owners of Magners and Bulmers – is 8.4 per cent in strength.

The report urges the drinks industry to recognise the damage caused by super-strength white ciders and to act responsibly and stop manufacturing it, alongside a series of recommendations for the government: to increase tax on ciders above five per cent in a bid to get manufacturers to decrease the alcohol levels in white ciders and to link cider duty rates to super-strength lagers; to look at minimum pricing; for the Licensing Act 2003 to be amended to allow local authorities to ban the sale of super-strength drinks across their locality; and to end to the practice of selling cider above five per cent in two and three litre bottles and a one litre cap to be introduced.

Heroin heroes: Methadone Man and Buprenorphine Babe are to spearhead a new drive to raise awareness about the lack of access in some parts of the world to these life-saving medications. In many countries, despite having high rates of drug injecting driven infections such as HIV, the medications are either not sanctioned by governments or banned. The campaign is being developed by the Open Society Institute's International Harm Reduction Development Programme.

For info go to www.methadoneman.org



DRUGS QUOTE

A mixture of *uninformed* and plain-clothes officers targeted Inverness Railway Station

The *Inverness Courier* with the inside story on a series of drugs raids which surprisingly netted ecstasy, cocaine and cannabis

Was Osama Bin Laden a pothead?

The question being asked on the internet after some wild cannabis was found growing in the vicinity of the dead fugitive's compound

They drove around in Ferraris, Lamborghinis, they had a private box at the O2 Arena and a yacht called 'Shaken not Stirred'

Drug detectives describe the 'James Bond' lifestyle of cocaine smugglers Timothy Eastgate and Paul Flisher

My advice to you is to give up drugs, go and learn English, go and get a job and do something useful

Judge Andrew Hamilton's advice to a Pakistani immigrant caught selling cannabis from his Derby flat

Okay, you said you bought some drugs from them and they didn't give you your change back?

Operator to a US man arrested after calling police to complain that his crack cocaine dealer had short-changed him