

S. U. News

The newsletter for Ealing Service Users

How will the Khat ban affect Ealing ?

From the 24th of June the plant khat, (botanical name *Catha edulis*, also known as qat, khut, kat, qut or xat) which was previously considered by many as a mild herbal stimulant that has been widely used in Britain's Somali, Yemeni and Ethiopian communities has been re-classified as a class C substance making it illegal to import, sell or possess it in the UK.

The ban was introduced by the home secretary, Theresa May, in the face of much opposition and against the advice of her official advisory committee on the misuse of drugs. The home secretary said there was a serious danger that Britain would become an international trading hub for a substance that has now been widely banned in the rest of Europe.



Prior to Tuesday around 20 tonnes of khat had been imported into Heathrow each day. The material can only be imported by air because the stimulate qualities of the plant, which is grown at altitude, remains active for only a few days after it is cut.

Due to its proximity to Heathrow and to sizeable Somali community in Ealing and Brent, Southall has become a major distribution centre for the drug which employs a large



number of local workers. According to the Evening Standard, the Met Police advice to khat traders in London is to switch to running cafes and driving taxis. Fortunately Ealing Police and the Council are taking a more pragmatic approach as there is real danger that this well established distribution network will be used for more serious drugs.

Police and local drug services are also concerned that with the supply of khat cut by Customs users will substitute their khat use with either alcohol or other stimulant drugs such as amphetamines. Individuals attempting to reduce and stop Khat use can experience withdrawal effects such as low mood, depression, sleeplessness and nightmares.

Reactions to the ban range widely. Some opponents of the ban, including Richard Branson say "Tensions between communities and the police will increase, attacking an ethnic minority and making their lives in the UK more difficult and dangerous. Plus, instead of a market worth 14 million per year being properly taxed, it will fall into the hands of criminal smuggling groups".

Opponents also point out that whilst there are negative effects of khat use including the break-up of families, domestic violence

and mental health problems associated with sustained use, these are no worse than the effects of alcohol and far less serious than the consequences of substituting khat use with more dangerous substances.

Police have been officially advised to use their discretion in deciding how to enforce the ban on khat. Official guidelines from the Association of Chief Police Officers tells constables that in applying a "three strikes" enforcement policy they should take into account that khat has "historically not been a controlled drug and was part of the culture of certain communities linked to the Horn of Africa."

RISE have appointed a dedicated khat worker and the service is waiting to see what effect the ban is likely to have in the long term.



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ANNUAL SERVICE USERS CONFERENCE THURSDAY 24th JULY

**ESSEX CHURCH HALL
112 Palace Gardens Terrace,
London W8 4RT
11am to 4pm**

**Registration from 10am.
(tea and coffee served)**

Lunch served and travel reimbursed

Central and North West London 

NHS Foundation Trust

Cycling for Health

FREE



Learn to cycle or gain the confidence and skills to get back on a bike!

WHEN? Every Wednesday, starting 25th June 2014 (for 5 weeks). One hour slots in the morning or afternoon

WHERE? Southall Park UB1 3BT

WHO CAN JOIN? For people over 16 who live in the borough of Ealing

COST? Cycling for Health is FREE and bikes are available

BOOK NOW! Contact Jean on 020 72324387 or email jean@cycletraining.co.uk

Places are limited and will be allocated on a first-come basis.

Service User Voice

The monthly Service User meeting for all Ealing RISE Service Users is held at the Social Café on the 2nd Tuesday of each month 2-30pm to 3-30pm (£5 voucher for attendees).

The next three dates for your diaries are:

- 8th July
- 12th August
- 9th September

Free Social Activities

**11th July - 7:45 pm Questors Theatre
Blue stockings by Jessica Swale**

July - QPR exact date tbc

Call Sean Kelly on 07858400543 for more details, to book a place and to get confirmation of dates and times.

About Your Newsletter

If you would like to provide articles on what's happening to drug and alcohol services in Ealing or help edit the newsletter please let us know, contact details below.

If you wish to be included on our e-mail mailing list, please e-mail "newsletter" to the e-mail address below, conversely if you no longer wish to receive the newsletter, e-mail "stop" and we will remove you from our list.

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Ealing Service Users Newsletter

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