



**'DRUG DRIVERS TARGETED IN MAJOR NEW CAMPAIGN ACROSS
GREATER MANCHESTER'**

(EMBARGOED UNTIL: 00.01 MONDAY 25TH FEBRUARY 2008)

A major new campaign is being launched across Greater Manchester this week, targeting drug drivers across the region.

New research* reveals that more than one in four young drivers (30 per cent), in and around the city, are getting behind the wheel after taking drugs and two out of five passengers (41 per cent) are readily admitting to getting into cars driven by drivers who have taken drugs.

Around 400,000 beer mats and 6,500 posters are being sent out across the city and surrounding towns with the message "Drug driving...you'd be off your head".

The campaign, which has been launched by the Greater Manchester Casualty Reduction Partnership, also includes a heavy weight advertising campaign on leading youth radio stations and a new website - www.offyourhead.info. The campaign aim is to help reduce the unacceptably high number of young driver and passenger casualties within the region every year

Chief Inspector Haydn Roberts from the Traffic Network Section and a member of the partnership said: "Like alcohol, drugs can seriously undermine your ability to drive safely.

“Greater Manchester Police is taking this illegal driving behaviour extremely seriously and we have made a major investment in training officers to undertake roadside drug impairment testing. Over 180 trained officers will be deployed during this campaign to specifically target drug drivers, so their chances of being caught are significantly increased”

Josie Wride, spokesperson for the Greater Manchester Casualty Reduction Partnership added: "We all know that drink and driving don't mix - we now need to get across the same message about drugs. Drug-driving is as unacceptable as drink-driving and our message to anybody taking drugs and getting behind the wheel is that not only is it dangerous to themselves, their passengers and other road users, but it also carries the risk of serious penalties, including prison. It's not worth the risk"

According to the Department for Transport, drugs can affect drivers by causing slower reaction times, poor concentration, sleepiness, confusion, distorted perception, over-confidence, impaired co-ordination, hallucinations, blurred vision, aggression and dizziness.

Treatment, counselling and support is available to users of drugs. People who would like more information and advice as well as details of where they can get treatment, can contact FRANK, the national helpline, on 0800 77 66 00 or visit www.talktofrank.com.

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Notes to Editors

* Surveys were conducted on Facebook and local radio station, XFM - in February 2008.

** **The Greater Manchester Casualty Reduction Partnership** is made up of the 8 borough and two city authorities within the county, the Highways Agency, Greater Manchester Police, Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service, MPCT, Her Majesty's Courts Service and the Crown Prosecution Service.

Campaign images are available on request

How drugs can affect driving:

Cannabis: Concentration can wander, affecting reaction times; paranoia and effects likely to be heightened when mixed with alcohol increasing sense of disorientation.

Cocaine: Stimulant drug that can lead to misjudging driving speed and stopping distance. Sense of light and sound affected; sense of overconfidence which can also lead to aggressive driving.

Ecstasy: Another stimulant drug, this time with hallucinogenic properties which can distort vision and heighten sense of sound, concentration is affected and significantly decreases awareness of road dangers.

LSD: Hallucinogenic drug that can strongly influence the senses; drivers may react to objects and sounds that aren't there, placing themselves and other road users in danger.