

The mushrooms are produced in clinical conditions

Ellen Timiney's home, on an otherwise ordinary Plymouth street, is a haven for hallucinogenic mushrooms.

Step inside her Plymouth flat and you are greeted by the moistness which mushrooms demand.

She has turned the burgeoning demand for the fungi into a business, by growing magic mushrooms for sale.

Ms Timiney grows them legally, then distributes the crop to cafes and shops across the South West.

It is part of a retail boom in the psychedelic fungi which have a similar effect to LSD.

Fresh mushrooms

It is the processing of the mushrooms, such as drying or freezing, that is currently prohibited.

Ms Timiney gets around the law by selling her mushrooms fresh. Opponents claim, however, that while the mushrooms may be legal, they are still dangerous.

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Ellen Timiney

Ms Timiney, 29, has set a room aside in her home to mushroom growing.

Cultures, available on the internet, are bred in clinical conditions and fetch about ?160 a kilogram.

Ms Timiney said: "We have quite a small operation, but we can produce 10 kilos of mushrooms a week."

She does not see herself as a drugs baron.

"I don't consider magic mushrooms as a drug. They are very spiritual things to take.

Mental health problems

"In many countries they are called the mushroom of God because they give you a sense of talking to God.

"But obviously if you have a mental health problem it is better not to take magic mushrooms," she said.

It is irresponsible to claim that any drug is risk free

Gary Wallace, Plymouth Drug Action Team

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"We have had no problem with the police at all and we fully intend to stay within the law as we understand it."

A spokeswoman for Devon and Cornwall Police confirmed she was not committing an offence.

Gary Wallace from the Plymouth Drug Action Team said: "Any plant or fungus that has a psycho-active element is a drug.

"It is also the case the hallucinogenic drugs such as magic mushrooms and LSD can affect the mental health of people that did not know they had a mental illness.

"So it is irresponsible to claim that any drug is risk free."

He said that legally, selling magic mushrooms was a grey area, but there were no plans to change the law.

"You can either prohibit it and risk handing everything over to the criminal world, or you can apply the law such as trading standards, but that is an issue for the government."

- BBC News