



29 April 2022

Young People's Drug & Alcohol Team
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Dear Parent/Carer

There are growing concerns across St Helens about the increasing use of a drug called ketamine by young people (may also be called "ket", "k", "Kenny"). You may have seen recent reports in the St Helens Star about this issue.

Officers from St Helens Council, Merseyside Police, health and other services are worried that ketamine use is having a harmful impact on our young people. It is becoming particularly popular at parties and other gatherings and children as young as 13-14 have reported to have used it.

The reason why people are worried is because, as an illegal drug, being sold as a white powder, it can cause a number of harms to physical and mental health. Regular use can result in problems such as bladder and urinary problems, where some may see blood in their urine or pain in their stomach or genital areas. Other young people are reporting damage to their nose and nasal passages because of snorting ketamine. It can be very addictive and people who use ketamine can very quickly feel the need to start using more and more and their use can become out of control.

Ketamine powder may also be being used with other drugs or with alcohol. This could cause very serious effects and could even lead to a fatality.

Ketamine is known as a "disassociate anaesthetic" – it can reduce awareness and sensitivity to pain as well as inhibiting movement. It can produce the effects of being disorientated, cause hallucinations, feelings of euphoria, limbs can feel heavy and people may be unable to speak properly. In higher doses it can cause out of body experiences (known as a "k-hole"). The effects may be different for different people depending on how much they have taken and if they have used with other drugs or alcohol.

Because of it's anaesthetic properties, people who use ketamine could often injure themselves without realising as their ability to feel pain is reduced.

By law, ketamine is a class B drug. If someone is found by the police to be in possession of ketamine they could be fined or up to 5 years in prison. Dealing (selling/supplying, even to friends) a class B drug could result in a prison sentence of up to 14 years.

Criminal gangs will often groom and “recruit” young people to sell drugs for them, there are strong links to child exploitation and we are worried that the children being exploited are selling drugs like ketamine to other young people.

As parents or carers we are asking you to be aware of these concerns, speak to your children about what they know or are hearing about ket - if your child is going to a party speak to them about the availability of drugs and if they are being offered this or seeing other young people using this.

If you are worried that your child may have been using ketamine, if they are showing any symptoms such as chronic pain, blood in their wee, constant sniffing and a runny nose please seek medical attention either through your GP, walk in centre, or in more serious cases A&E.

For more information about drugs like ketamine you can find this on the “Talk to Frank” website:

<https://www.talktofrank.com/>

If you are concerned about drug dealing in your local area you can report this anonymously through

Crimestoppers: <https://crimestoppers-uk.org/> or Merseyside Police’s “Tell Us” website

<https://www.merseyside.police.uk/tua/tell-us-about/> - if you see a crime taking place and it’s an emergency - call 999

Young people can also speak to staff in schools, a teacher or pastoral support or school nurse.

You can also contact local services for advice and support:

For young people (up to the age of 19), contact the Young People’s Drug and Alcohol Team – 01744 675605 or email: ypdaat@sthelens.gov.uk

If you have concerns about an adult drug user please contact CGL - 01744 410752 or

www.changegrowlive.org

Yours Sincerely,



Helen Jones

Team Manager

Young People’s Drug and Alcohol Team