

Friday 19<sup>th</sup> December

Dear Parents and Carers,

We are writing to make you aware of an important national campaign that has recently been launched to help protect young people from emerging drug-related risks. The Government and public health teams are warning about the increasing dangers linked to ketamine, synthetic opioids found in counterfeit medicines, and adulterated THC vapes (vapes containing cannabis-related substances).

Young people across the country are being increasingly exposed to these substances, and many may not be aware of the serious harm they can cause. These risks include irreversible bladder damage, poisoning, and in some cases life-threatening reactions.

Key concerns highlighted in the campaign:

- Ketamine: Despite its medical uses, recreational ketamine use is unsafe. Doctors are seeing more young people with severe bladder problems linked to frequent use.
- Counterfeit medicines containing synthetic opioids: Strong, illegally produced opioids—especially nitazenes—are now being found in fake pills purchased online. These drugs can be far more potent than expected and may be taken by young people who have little or no experience with drug use.
- THC vapes: Reports are increasing of vapes containing synthetic cannabinoids such as “spice”. These substances can be much stronger than natural cannabis and cause unpredictable and dangerous effects.

How we are supporting students:

Schools have been provided with new resources from the Office for Health Improvement and Disparities (OHID) to help educate students and staff about these risks. Our local Drug, Alcohol, Vaping and Tobacco Misuse Policy also guides how we respond to concerns and how we support any young person who may be struggling.

We encourage you to speak to your child about these issues. Open conversations at home can make a significant difference in helping young people make safe and informed choices.

Helpful information and support

You may find the following resources useful:

- FRANK – national drug information service
  - General information: *FRANK – The Drug Information Website*
  - Synthetic opioids: *Drugs cut with dangerous substances – FRANK*
  - Ketamine: *Effects of Ketamine – FRANK*
  - Synthetic cannabinoids: *Synthetic Cannabinoids – Effects and Risks – FRANK*
- Local support services:
 

Young People's Drug and Alcohol Service (Aquarius)

Website: <https://aquarius.org.uk/services/young-people/bedfordshire/>

Tel: 0330 008 3925 or 07467 336203

Email: [ypbedfordshire@aquarius.org.uk](mailto:ypbedfordshire@aquarius.org.uk)
- Adult Drug and Alcohol Service (Path 2 Recovery – P2R)
 

Website: <https://www.elft.nhs.uk/services/path-2-recovery-p2r-bedford-borough>

Tel: 0333 332 019

Email: [elft.p2rsupportsystems@nhs.net](mailto:elft.p2rsupportsystems@nhs.net)

#### Reporting concerns:

The Bedfordshire, Luton and Milton Keynes Local Drug Information System (LDIS) monitors new and dangerous drug trends. Professionals and parents can report concerns via [LDIS@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:LDIS@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk).

Thank you for your continued support in helping us keep our children and young people safe. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact the school.