Data from over 2,000 15-18 year olds surveyed by drugs education charity the DSM Foundation shows the risks of a lack of understanding of UK drug laws

Monday 15 January, 2024

Parties and gatherings were named as the most common place for 15-18 year olds to obtain drugs by over three quarters of more than 2,100 young people surveyed. The data, collected by drugs education charity the DSM Foundation, highlights the risks there can be to young people from a lack of understanding that drug transactions in such situations are regarded as “supply” rather than “possession” in the eyes of law, and therefore are subject to harsher penalties in the case of a criminal conviction.

The legal situation surrounding drugs is just one of many topics covered by the DSM Foundation in its drugs education workshops – delivered to over 12,000 school and college students in the autumn term of 2023 – and we know from our work with young people that their understanding of the law relating to supply of drugs to your friends is often limited. The charity also ran 22 workshops for parents and caregivers, and 19 for school staff and other professionals working with young people. Students in Year 11-13 (or equivalent) are asked to complete an anonymous pre-workshop survey to help the charity plan sessions that are as relevant as possible to each cohort’s requirements and context.

The survey data for the 2023 autumn term of students in Years 11 to 13 revealed outdoor areas such as parks as the second most common place young people were aware of their peers coming across drugs (54 per cent compared to 75 per cent for parties and gatherings). Next were someone’s house (44 per cent), social media (40 per cent), online (32 per cent), and school (30 per cent).

Students were asked about the reasons for someone their age using drugs, with “curiosity”, “socializing” and “for fun/relaxation” the highest rated responses. However, over 58 per cent stated “feeling pressured” as one of the three main reasons they thought someone their age might use drugs, with nearly 40 per cent citing “coping with problems” and over 25 per cent “addiction” in their top three.

Vaping appeared to be the most common substance in use, with over 96 per cent of respondents naming it. In response to the question “Which are the main substances people in your year group use, if they do?”, vaping was the most popular answer, followed by alcohol at 92 per cent, cannabis/weed at 71 per cent, and cigarettes at 66 per cent. The next most commonly given answer was cannabis edibles at 38 per cent, then nitrous oxide at 24 per cent, and ketamine at 19 per cent. Other drugs, including magic mushrooms, cocaine, MDMA/ecstasy, steroids, LSD and benzodiazepines, were each mentioned by fewer than 15 per cent of respondents.

Vaping was also top in terms of the substances young people regarded as causing the most problems for their peers, with nearly 80 per cent citing it. Next was alcohol at 54 per cent, cannabis/weed at 38 per cent and cigarettes at 36 per cent, with all other substances at under 14 per cent.

DSM Foundation Director, Founder and Dan’s mum Fiona Spargo-Mabbs OBE said: “This data, and the voice of young people the survey captures, is incredibly useful for us in planning our drug education to make sure it is current, relevant, and meets the needs and priorities of students. The survey also provides an invaluable insight into evolving trends, attitudes and behaviours, which informs all our wider work. Effective drug education needs to cover the full spectrum of the risks and potential consequences of drug use, including the risks of criminality, as well as opportunities to develop the decision-making skills to manage those often complex adolescent social dynamics safely. So-called ‘social supply’ is an all-too easy hole for them to fall into without realizing.”

Information for editors:

The DSM Foundation was established in 2014 following the death of 16 year old Daniel Spargo-Mabbs from an accidental overdose of ecstasy. His family felt that he simply hadn’t known enough to be able to make decisions that would keep him safe, and realized there was a huge gap in the resources and support available to schools, so set up the charity in order to spare other families going through what they had experienced.

The aim of the DSM Foundation is to provide young people with relevant, age-appropriate, up to date and evidence-based information about drugs so they develop the skills to make choices that will keep themselves and their friends as safe as possible. To this end, the charity does a lot of work in schools,

Media:



Related Sectors:

Charities & non-profits :: Children & Teenagers :: Education & Human Resources :: Lifestyle & Relationships ::

Related Keywords:

Drug :: Law :: Charity :: Education :: Vaping :: Supply :: Cannabis :: Alcohol :: Teens :: Teenagers ::

Scan Me:

colleges and community organisations with children and young people, and also provides workshops for parents and caregivers, and training for school and college staff – the two groups shown by NHS survey data as the most likely sources of information about drugs and alcohol sought out by 11-15 year olds. Educational settings are also able to access “I Love You Mum, I Promise I Won’t Die”, a verbatim play by Mark Wheeller that was commissioned by the charity to tell Dan’s story in the words of his family and friends, through studying the work itself, or booking a Theatre in Education performance. Schools and colleges can also download age-appropriate, relevant, up to date and evidence-based drugs education resources free of charge from the DSM Foundation website for delivery by teachers through PSHE/PSE provision.

For more information about the DSM Foundation, go to https://www.dsmfoundation.org.uk/.

Media enquiries about this press release or the work of the DSM Foundation should be sent to media@dsmfoundation.org.uk.

Company Contact:

_

The Daniel Spargo-Mabbs Foundation

T.
E. media@dsmfoundation.org.uk
W. https://www.dsmfoundation.org.uk/

Additional Contact(s):
Asha Fowells, media@dsmfoundation.org.uk

View Online

Additional Assets:

Newsroom: Visit our Newsroom for all the latest stories:
https://www.dsmf.pressat.co.uk