

DSM Foundation welcomes government move to try and deal with issues being posed by xylazine and nitazenes

Thursday 16 January, 2025

Drugs education charity the DSM Foundation has welcomed the Government's announcement of steps to combat the threat posed by synthetic drugs such as nitazenes (strong laboratory-manufactured opioids) and xylazine (a veterinary sedative).

DSM Foundation Director and Founder mum Fiona Spargo-Mabbs OBE said: ""As a charity founded in response to the loss of a young life to drugs, with the story of my 16 year old son Dan who was taken far too soon at its heart, any news of more drug-related deaths hits us hard. The rise of strong synthetics that have been causing increasing numbers of fatalities in the UK have been a great source of concern for us, as for so many others, and we know that each individual will have left a hole in the lives of the many people that knew and loved them. We've been working incredibly hard for well over a decade now to do all we can to reduce drug-related harm through evidence-based drug education. Any difference that can be made through wider work being done by the many other agencies to identify risk and prevent harm, and ultimately save lives, is welcomed by us as a charity."

In the DSM Foundation's work with young people and the adults in their lives, nitazenes and xylazine don't feature overtly, but are sometimes mentioned in the context of illegal drugs being unregulated and therefore unknown quantities in terms of their ingredients and strength, and hence making the effects and risks even more unpredictable. This principle can also apply to products that young people may regard as legal, such as vapes, many of which are manufactured and handled outside the UK regulations, an issue that seems particularly problematic for under 18s who shouldn't be able to access them in the first place. The charity published a blog on nitazenes last year which can be read at <https://www.dsmfoundation.org.uk/blog-nitazenes/>

The government announcement can be seen at <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/britain-working-at-pace-to-curb-rising-synthetic-drugs-threat>

Information for editors:

The DSM Foundation is a drug education charity 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 is currently working in almost 750 schools, 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 Wheeler that was commissioned by the charity to tell Dan's story in the words of his family and friends, through studying the work itself (sometimes due to it being a GCSE Drama set text on the Eduqas syllabus), or booking a Theatre in Education performance. Schools and colleges can also download age-appropriate, relevant, up to date and evidence-based drugs education lesson resources free of charge from the DSM Foundation website for delivery by teachers through PSHE/PSE provi

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