

The logo for 'evolve' features the word in a red, lowercase, sans-serif font. The letter 'e' is stylized with three green circles above it. A blue butterfly icon is positioned in the top right corner of the white background area.

tackling the impact of substance misuse

**SERVICE
PROVISION
2024**

***WE ARE EXCITED TO SHARE OUR
SERVICE PROVISION WITH YOU!***

MISSION STATEMENT

Our mission is to provide dedicated services to young people, adults, families, professionals, and organisations to promote understanding, awareness, and education on the consequences of Substance Misuse, Volatile Substance Misuse, Vaping, and County Lines. We are committed to working towards the prevention of related deaths, illnesses, accidents, crimes, and their impact on families and communities, creating a safer, stronger, and healthier environment.

Our services include education, confidential support, counselling, mental health first aid, and information to all those affected by such misuse. We provide these services free of charge.

We actively encourage the involvement of children and young people in all aspects of our service provision.

TRUSTEES

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Judi Blacow - Vice Chair

Roy Brandon - Treasurer

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Actor

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CONTENTS

**PAGE 1
BACKGROUND**

**PAGE 2-6
VOLATILE SUBSTANCE MISUSE - VSA**

**PAGE 7-9
NITROUS OXIDE**

**PAGE 10-14
KETAMINE**

**PAGE 15-17
PIPERAZINES/PARTY PILLS**

**PAGE 18-23
SYNTHETIC CANNIBANOIDS/SPICE**

**PAGE 24
SPICE VAPES/ZOMBIE VAPES**

**PAGE 25-28
VAPES**

**PAGE 29-31
COUNTY LINES**

**PAGE 32-33
IN AN EMERGENCY**

**PAGE 34
EDUCATION & AWARENESS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE
COUNSELLING & FAMILY SUPPORT**

**PAGE 35
PROFESSIONAL/PARENT/GUARDIAN/CARER TRAINING**

**PAGE 36
YOUNG PERSONS ADVISORY GROUP (YPAG) - THE EVOLVER'S**

BACKGROUND

Evolve is a grass roots charity & lived experience organisation working with young people and adults to provide age-appropriate preventative education, early intervention, counselling, family support and training for professionals in relation to Volatile Substance Misuse (VSA), Substance Misuse, Vaping & County Lines (trafficking drugs into rural areas and smaller towns, away from major cities).

Its two co-founders have a vast knowledge of substance misuse, especially Volatile Substance Misuse (VSA) and between them they have over 50 years' experience in this field.

Barbara Skinner MBE, a former nurse, founded an extremely successful VSA charity in 1989 following the death of her 16-year-old son, Darren, due to VSA. She became its CEO and worked tirelessly to prevent VSA until her "retirement" in 2012. Barbara has since, passed away, and is very sadly missed.

Ally Hodgson has spent many years as a qualified counsellor and educator in the field of substance misuse and has personal experience of the consequences of substance misuse after a drug related murder within her own close family.

Following retirement for Barbara and redundancy for Ally, they discovered an enormous gap in service provision in relation to VSA. After researching the subject they decided to launch a new charity to bridge the gap between illegal substance misuse and VSA... **Evolve** was founded.

Whilst concentrating on prevention through education and emotional impact, Evolve will engage with those who misuse these substances, many of whom know there's a better path to be on but just don't know how to get there. Evolve will strive to help them with the provision of counselling, mental health first aid and family support.

Working within the community, Evolve hopes to enable those who misuse to identify their value, redefine their sense of self, make positive choices, and seek to a brighter future ... all before "at risk" becomes "inevitable" through its specific service provision of education, early intervention, counselling and family support programmes.

VOLATILE SUBSTANCE MISUSE - VSA

A wide range of glues, gases, solvents and aerosols containing volatile substances, which people inhale to get high.

Also called:

- Aerosols
- Butane
- Gas
- Glue sniffing
- Huffing
- Tooting
- Volatile substances

What does it look like?

There are lots of glues, gases, and aerosols which, when inhaled, can cause you harm.

Many are normal household products – such as:

- Butane gas lighter refills
- Cream chargers
- Aerosols containing hairspray
- Deodorants and air fresheners
- Tins or tubes of glue
- Some paints, thinners and correcting fluids
- Cleaning fluids
- Surgical spirit
- Petrol

How do people take it?

Glues, gases, solvents, and aerosols are breathed in or inhaled from something acting as a container or holder. There are several different ways to do this, but whatever method is used, it is difficult to control the dose and all methods are potentially fatal.

The risk is greater if used in an enclosed space or if a plastic bag is used that covers both the nose and mouth. The risk is also increased when inhaling directly from a butane cigarette lighter refill.

How does it make you feel?

Glues, gases, solvents, and aerosols contain volatile substances which are depressants, which means they slow down your brain and body's responses and produce a similar effect to being drunk.

The effects can vary from person to person and depend on what specific glue, gas, solvent or aerosol has been used, but the common effects can include:

Feeling like being drunk with dizziness, dreaminess, fits of the giggles, and difficulty thinking straight.

Getting a hangover afterwards – such as a severe headache, feeling tired and/or feeling depressed.

How does it make people behave?

The effects can vary from person to person and depend on what specific glue, gas, solvent, or aerosol has been used, but the common effects can include:

- Mood swings
- Aggressive behaviour
- Hallucinations
- Vomiting and blackouts

Duration

How long the effects last and the drug stays in your system depends on how much you've taken, your size and what other drugs you may have also taken.

How long it lasts

How long the effect of glues, gases, solvents or aerosols lasts varies and some users tend to keep repeating the dose to keep the feeling going.

In the case of butane, the effects can last up to 30 minutes, and nitrous oxide around 20 to 30 seconds.

Physical health risks

Because glues, gases, solvents and aerosols are available as household products, some people think they are safe to use, but they're not.

There are over 50 deaths a year involving glues, gases, solvents and aerosols. Of the substances, butane is involved in the most deaths.

Here's what else they could do to you:

- Inhaling glues, gases, solvents and/or aerosols can cause confusion, slurred speech, mood swings, aggressive behaviour, hallucinations, vomiting, blackouts and breathing difficulties. They can also cause your heart to go out of rhythm, which if severe, can lead to a heart attack
- Squirted gas products down the throat is a particularly dangerous way of taking the drug. It can make your throat swell up so you can't breathe and it can slow down your heart and can cause a heart attack
- Some users die from passing out and choking on their own vomit
- You risk suffocation if you inhale from a plastic bag over your head
- Long-term solvent use can damage the muscles, liver and kidneys. While very long-term use, such as 10 years or more, can cause a lasting impairment of brain function (especially affecting how the brain controls body movement)
- It can be hard to get the dose right. Just enough will give the desired 'high' – a little too much can result in a coma or even death
- In the case of some solvents, you can develop a red rash around the mouth
- Unsteadiness, disorientation/confusion and fainting can all contribute to the risk of accidents which are implicated in a number of the deaths
- Many products are flammable and there is a risk of burns and explosions, especially if someone is smoking nearby or if in an enclosed space

Mental health risks

They can seriously affect your judgment and when you're high there's a real danger you'll try something dangerous

What are Glues, Gases and Aerosols cut with?

Because glues, gases, solvents and aerosols are easily available as household products, purity is not normally an issue, however, different glues, gases, solvents and aerosols will contain different ingredients and chemicals, some of which may also be harmful.

Mixing

Is it dangerous to mix with other drugs?

Mixing drugs is always risky but some mixtures are more dangerous than others.

What happens if I mix Glues, gases and aerosols and Alcohol -

Dangerous

Glues, gases and aerosols and Alcohol are both depressants.

Mixing depressants together is particularly dangerous. It increases the risk of overdose as well as other dangers like blacking out and not remembering what you've done.

What happens if I mix Glues, gases and aerosols and Piperazines/Party Pills -

Increases risk

Mixing any drug (including Glues, gases and aerosols) with another (including Piperazines) increases the risk of having a bad time. It's also likely to increase any harms associated with each drug.

Mixing any stimulant with a depressant makes it harder to judge the effect each drug is having. It might mean you take more of each drug than you meant to.

Addiction

Can you get addicted?

Tolerance can build up within a few weeks in regular users, so you might need to use more to achieve the same effects. This reverts back to normal within a few days of stopping.

It may be possible to become psychologically dependent on volatile substances, meaning the users develop an increased desire to keep using despite any harms they experience, but the evidence on this is limited.

Withdrawal symptoms have been reported in regular users. When they stop their use they experience anxiety, irritability and headaches.

The law

Class: Psychoactive Substances

- Some volatile substances are covered by the 2016 Psychoactive Substances Act, which means it's illegal to give away or sell
- There's no penalty for possession, unless you're in prison
- Supply and production can get you up to 7 years in prison, an unlimited fine or both

Like drink-driving, driving when high is dangerous and illegal. If you're caught driving under the influence, you may receive a heavy fine, driving ban, or prison sentence.

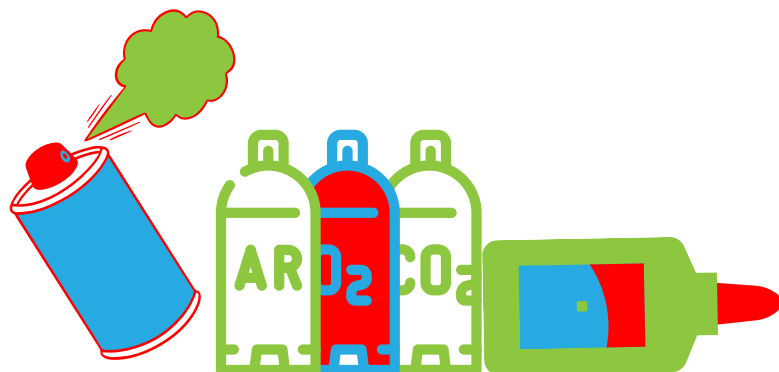
If the police catch people supplying illegal drugs in a home, club, bar or hostel, they can potentially prosecute the landlord, club owner or any other person concerned in the management of the premises.

Additional law details

Glues, gases, solvents and aerosols aren't illegal, but this doesn't mean that they are safe to use. It's illegal in England and Wales for anyone to sell glues, gases, solvents and aerosols to people, if they think they're likely to be inhaling them to get high.

Under Scottish law you can be prosecuted for recklessly selling substances to any age group if you suspect they're going to inhale them.

It is illegal to sell petrol to anyone under the age of 16 or to supply butane gas lighter refills to anyone under the age of 18. This applies to the whole of the UK.



NOS is a colourless gas sold in canisters, usually inhaled using a balloon.

Also called:

- Balloons
- Chargers
- Hippie Crack
- Laughing Gas
- Nos
- Noz
- Whippits

What does it look like?

Nitrous oxide is a colourless gas that's most commonly found in pressurised metal canisters.

You may have seen these shiny metal canisters or 'whippets' lying around in streets outside bars and nightclubs.

What does it taste/smell like?

Some people say that the gas has a slightly sweet smell and taste.

How do people take it?

Nitrous oxide is inhaled. People open the canister, transfer the gas into a container (usually a balloon), then inhale from the balloon.

Inhaling nitrous oxide directly from the canister is very dangerous because the gas is under such high pressure and it comes out as extremely cold. This can damage your throat and lungs, stop you breathing or slow your heart to a dangerous level.

Using nitrous oxide directly from a large canister makes it harder to keep track of how much you are taking so you're more likely to suffer the negative effects of using a lot of gas.



How does it make you feel?

Nitrous oxide slows down your brain and your body's responses, and the effects of the drug varies depending on how much has been inhaled.

Taking nitrous oxide can cause:

- Feelings of euphoria, relaxation and calmness
- Fits of giggles and laughter – hence the nickname 'laughing gas'
- Sound distortions and hallucinations – when you see or hear things that aren't there

Nitrous oxide can also:

- Give you a severe headache
- Cause dizziness
- Stop you thinking straight
- Cause short-lived but intense feelings of paranoia

Duration

How long the effects last and the drug stays in your system depends on how much you've taken, your size and what other drugs you may have also taken.

Nitrous oxide is often taken in combination with other drugs. So its effects can be unpredictable, as it depends on what other drugs are being taken with it.

It is a short acting drug which can lead to people to frequently re-dose and end up using more than they intended.

Addiction

Can you get addicted?

It may be possible to become psychologically dependent on nitrous oxide, meaning that users develop an increased desire to keep using it despite the harm it may cause, but the evidence on this is limited.

In anecdotal reports, some people have reported developing cravings or feelings that they want to continue using nitrous oxide.



Physical health risks

- It is very dangerous to inhale nitrous oxide directly from the canister, and doing it in an enclosed space is also very dangerous
- Never place a plastic bag over your head
- If you take too much nitrous oxide you risk falling unconscious and/or suffocating from the lack of oxygen. People have died this way
- Dizziness, which might make you act carelessly or dangerously
- Heavy regular use of nitrous oxide can lead to a deficiency of vitamin B12 and to a form of anaemia. Severe B12 deficiency can lead to serious nerve damage, causing tingling and numbness in the fingers and toes. This can be very painful and make walking difficult. It can even lead to paralysis, and the damage may be lasting
- Regular use can stop you forming white blood cells properly
- It can be hard to judge the amount to use safely. If you have too much you can end up fainting, having an accident or worse

The law

Class: C

This is a Class C drug, which means it's illegal to have for yourself, give away or sell.

Possession can get you up to 2 years in prison, an unlimited fine or both.

Supplying someone else, even your friends, can get you up to 14 years in prison, an unlimited fine or both.

Like drink-driving, driving when high is dangerous and illegal. If you're caught driving under the influence, you may receive a heavy fine, driving ban, or prison sentence.

If the police catch people supplying illegal drugs in a home, club, bar or hostel, they can potentially prosecute the landlord, club owner or any other person concerned in the management of the premises.



Ketamine is sold as a grainy white or light brown powder. Looks similar to cocaine but is a very different drug.

Also called:

- K
- Ket
- Special K
- Super K
- Vitamin K

What does it look like?

- A clear liquid, when used in medicine
- A grainy white or brown crystalline powder when sold on the street
- Tablets, although this is less common

What does it taste/smell like?

Ketamine tastes bitter and unpleasant.

How do people take it?

Ketamine is used in medicine as an anesthetic for humans and animals.

By snorting it as a powder - Most people who take powder ketamine will snort it. Users often talk of taking a 'bump', meaning they snort a small amount of ketamine. In the UK, snorting is the most common way to take ketamine.

By injecting it - People who regularly use ketamine sometimes inject it to get a bigger hit. They usually inject ketamine into a muscle.

By swallowing it as a tablet - Some people swallow it in tablet form, but this is less common.

By bombing - Some people 'bomb' it, which is swallowing the powder wrapped in a cigarette paper.



How does it make you feel?

Ketamine is a general anaesthetic so it reduces sensations in the body. Trips can last for a couple of hours.

Taking ketamine can make you feel:

- Dream-like and detached
- Chilled, relaxed and happy
- Confused and nauseated

Ketamine can also:

- Alter your perception of time and space and make you hallucinate (see or hear things that aren't there)
- Stop you feeling pain, putting you at risk of hurting yourself and not realising it

If you take too much ketamine you may lose the ability to move and go into a 'k-hole'. This feels like your mind and body have separated and you can't do anything about it – which can be a very scary experience.

Regular ketamine use can cause:

- Agitation
- Panic attacks
- Damage to short- and long-term memory
- Depression, if taken frequently

How does it make people behave?

It can make people seem slower, more relaxed and chilled out, but it can also stop people from being able to move properly and from making sense.



Duration

How long the effects last and the drug stays in your system depends on how much you've taken, your size and what other drugs you may have also taken.

To kick in

When snorted, ketamine normally takes about 15 minutes to take effect. When taken orally, it will take longer, around 20 minutes to an hour.

How long it lasts

The buzz can last around for 30 minutes to an hour, but the effects really depend on how much you take.

After effects

People may feel down and low in mood for a few days after using ketamine.

How long will it be detectable?

Ketamine can be detected in a urine test for several days after taking it.

How long a drug can be detected for depends on how much is taken and which testing kit is used. This is only a general guide.

Mental health risks

- The longer term effects of ketamine use can include flashbacks, memory loss and problems with concentration
- Regular use can cause depression and, occasionally, psychotic symptoms such as hallucinations. Ketamine can also make existing mental health problems worse
- Interestingly, medical grade ketamine is now being researched as a potential treatment for severe depression, but it is too early to know the results of this research

What is ketamine cut with?

Street ketamine is usually sold as a white/beige crystallised powder and is sometimes cut with other powders to add weight and improve the dealer's profits. It's impossible to tell whether the ketamine you buy has been cut with other substances by looking at it.



Physical health risks

- Ketamine is a very powerful anesthetic that can cause serious harm. Taking ketamine can be fatal, particularly if it is mixed with other drugs
- Ketamine can increase your heart rate and blood pressure. It can make you confused, agitated, delirious and disconnected from reality
- It can make you feel sick, and it can cause damage to your short- and long-term memory
- Because of the body's loss of feelings, paralysis of the muscles and the mind's loss of touch with reality, you can be left vulnerable to hurting yourself or being hurt by others
- Because you don't feel pain properly when you've recently taken ketamine, you can injure yourself and not know you've done it
- Ketamine can cause serious bladder problems, with the urgent and frequent need to pee. This can be very painful and the pee can be blood-stained. Although stopping using ketamine can help, sometimes the damage can be so serious that the bladder needs surgical repair or even removal
- The urinary tract, from the kidneys down to the bladder, can also be affected and incontinence (uncontrolled peeing) may also develop
- Abdominal pain, sometimes called 'K cramps', have been reported by people who have taken ketamine for a long time
- Evidence of liver damage due to regular, heavy ketamine use is emerging. The liver has a range of important functions, such as cleaning your blood and removing toxic substances

Addiction

Can you get addicted?

Yes. People who become addicted to ketamine will keep taking it – whether they're aware of the health risks or not. Others will attend drug treatment services to help them stop.

People who use ketamine regularly can develop a tolerance to it, which could lead to them taking even more to get the effects they're looking for. There are no physical withdrawal symptoms with ketamine, so ketamine addiction is sometimes called a psychological dependence.



The law

Class: B

- This is a Class B drug, which means it's illegal to have for yourself, give away or sell
- Possession can get you up to 5 years in prison, an unlimited fine or both
- Supplying someone else, even your friends, can get you up to 14 years in prison, an unlimited fine or both

Like drink-driving, driving when high is dangerous and illegal. If you're caught driving under the influence, you may receive a heavy fine, driving ban, or prison sentence.

If the police catch people supplying illegal drugs in a home, club, bar or hostel, they can potentially prosecute the landlord, club owner or any other person concerned in the management of the premises.



PIPERAZINES/PARTY PILLS

Piperazines are a broad class of chemical compounds which mimic the effects of ecstasy.

Also called:

- A2
- BZP
- Benzylpiperazine
- Blast
- Bolts Extra Strength
- Cosmic Kelly
- Esp
- Euphoria
- Exodus
- Fast Lane
- Frenzy
- Happy Pills
- Legal E
- Legal X
- Nemesis
- Party Pills
- Pep
- Pep Love
- Pep Stoned
- Pep Twisted
- Rapture
- Silver Bullet
- Smileys
- The Good Stuff



What do they look like?

Piperazines can come in various forms and shapes. Pills can be red, blue, pink, white, off-white, purple, orange, tan and mottled orange-brown. They can carry an impression such as a housefly, crown, heart, butterfly, smiley face, bull's head, autobot, bird flying, Mickey Mouse, five pointed star, Superman and a witch's hat.

Piperazines are also sold as an off-white powder, in capsules and as a liquid. The best known piperazines are BZP (benzylpiperazine), TFMPP, DBZP and MCPP.

How do people take them?

Piperazines are taken as pills that come in various forms, colours and shapes.

How do they make you feel?

BZP was originally evaluated as an antidepressant drug. Now it is found mainly as a substitute for MDMA (Ecstasy).

The stimulant effects of piperazines are similar to MDMA but dose for dose they are not as potent.

Effects can last for 6 to 8 hours and include feelings of:

- Euphoria
- Being alert, alive and full of energy
- Arousal
- Sleeplessness
- Loss of appetite

Duration

How long the effects last and the drug stays in your system depends on how much you've taken, your size and what other drugs you may have also taken.

How long it lasts

The effects of taking piperazines can last for 6 to 8 hours.



Physical health risks

- Users often suffer a hangover-like reaction that can last for up to 24 hours
- Agitation, vomiting, stomach pain, fits, irregular heart rhythms, diarrhoea, allergic reactions and fever have been reported
- As stimulant drugs, piperazines are particularly risky if taken by anyone suffering from high blood pressure or a heart condition. And you may not know that you have a pre-existing heart condition
- Perfectly healthy young people can have a fit or heart attack after taking stimulant drugs
- In rare cases, users may suffer from serotonin syndrome, which can cause high blood pressure and be fatal

What are piperazines cut with?

The chemical composition of substances sold as piperazines are changing all the time, which is why you can never be sure of what you're getting and how it could affect you.

Addiction

Can you get addicted?

Early studies suggest that you can become dependent. It is very similar to amphetamine use, i.e. taking speed.

The law

Class: C

- This is a Class C drug, which means it's illegal to have for yourself, give away or sell.
- Possession can get you up to 2 years in prison, an unlimited fine or both
- Supplying someone else, even your friends, can get you up to 14 years in prison, an unlimited fine or both

Like drink-driving, driving when high is dangerous and illegal. If you're caught driving under the influence, you may receive a heavy fine, driving ban, or prison sentence.

If the police catch people supplying illegal drugs in a home, club, bar or hostel, they can potentially prosecute the landlord, club owner or any other person concerned in the management of the premises.



Synthetic cannabinoids are chemicals designed to act like the main psychoactive chemical in cannabis

Also called:

- Amsterdam Gold
- Annihilation
- Black Mamba
- Blue Cheese
- Bombay Blue Extreme
- Clockwork Orange
- Devil's Weed
- Eccess
- Exodus Damnation
- K2
- Mary Joy
- Spice
- Tai High Hawaiian Haze

What does it look like?

In their pure form, synthetic cannabinoids are either solids or oils. They are then added to dried herbs, vegetable matter or plant cuttings to make a smoking mixture (so that it looks more like real herbal cannabis).

The most commonly known synthetic cannabinoid is Spice.

The smoking mixtures are packaged in small, often colourful sachets with labels describing the contents as incense or herbal smoking mixture, and usually stating 'not for human consumption'.

There are many different names given to herbal smoking mixtures, some of the most common are listed in the 'Also called' section at the top of the page.

There are many different brand names for smoking mixtures, but it is not uncommon for different brands to contain the same synthetic cannabinoids.



How do people take it?

Synthetic cannabinoids are normally used in a similar way to cannabis:

- They can be mixed with tobacco, rolled up into a spliff or joint, and then smoked
- They can be smoked without tobacco using a pipe or bong
- As e-cigarettes have become more available, there are reports of some people using e-cig technology for synthetic cannabinoids, and that e-liquids containing synthetic cannabinoids have been produced that can be used with normal e-cigs
- They can also be swallowed, eaten with food or made into a drink
- There are increasing reports of synthetic cannabis edibles, looking like sweets such as gummies, lollipops, and other sweets

How does it make you feel?

Since synthetic cannabinoids act like cannabis, the effects - good and bad - are similar. Some users will feel happy and relaxed, may get the giggles, feel hunger pangs and become very talkative. Others mainly feel ill or paranoid.

Because synthetic cannabinoids react more strongly with the brain's cannabis receptors they're more potent than natural cannabis. This means it's easier to use too much and experience unpleasant and harmful effects.

Synthetic cannabinoids act like THC, the active substance in natural cannabis, but are often more potent, so it's easier to use too much and experience unpleasant and harmful effects.

Typical effects include:

- Feelings of being happy, euphoric and relaxed, with some people getting the giggles, feeling hunger pangs and becoming very talkative, while others get more drowsy
- Mood and perception can change, and concentration and coordination may become difficult. Synthetic cannabinoids, possibly because of their potency, are more likely to be associated with hallucinations than natural cannabis
- Some will have quite bad reactions, such as paranoia, panic attacks and forgetfulness



Duration

How long the effects last and the drug stays in your system depends on how much you've taken, your size and what other drugs you may have also taken.

Physical health risks

The risks of synthetic cannabinoids are similar to natural cannabis, but because synthetic cannabinoids are more potent, it is easy to use too much and experience the unpleasant and harmful effects. This higher potency also means that the effects may last for longer.

Also, because many synthetic cannabinoids are new, they may have unknown effects too. We know that there have been a number of deaths that have been associated with the use of synthetic cannabinoids, either on their own or with other substances. There may also be risks from smoking the plant material itself – as occurs with tobacco and cannabis smoking.

Reported side-effects from using synthetic cannabinoids include:

- feelings of light headedness, dizziness, confusion and tiredness
- feeling excited, agitated and aggressive
- mood swings
- anxiety and paranoia
- suicidal thoughts
- memory problems and amnesia
- nausea and vomiting
- hot flushes
- increased heart rate and blood pressure, which may cause chest pains and damage your heart and even cause a heart attack
- excessive sweating
- fingers, toes or muscles feel numb and tingly
- tremors, seizures and fits



Other risks for synthetic cannabinoids:

- Research suggests that there may be an association between using synthetic cannabinoids and acute kidney injury
- Many synthetic cannabinoids have a chemical structure that is similar to serotonin, a natural chemical found in the body. It's been suggested that there's a risk that synthetic cannabinoids could overstimulate the serotonin system (called serotonin syndrome), which can result in high fever, rapid pulse, sweating, agitation, confusion, convulsions, organ failure, coma and even death
- Because of the way that smoking mixtures are made, there can be differences in the concentration of synthetic cannabinoids in individual packets and between different batches. You can never be 100% sure of how powerful a dose you are going to take

Mental health risks

- Synthetic cannabinoids are more likely to be associated with hallucinations than natural cannabis, possibly because of their potency
- Use of synthetic cannabinoids can cause psychotic episodes, which in extreme cases could last for weeks
- Regular use could cause a relapse of mental health illness or increase the risk of developing a mental illness, especially if you have a family history of mental illness

Addiction

Can you get addicted?

Research suggests that you can become dependent on synthetic cannabinoids, especially if you use them regularly. Whether or not you're dependent will be influenced by a number of factors, including how long you've been using it, how much you use and whether you are just more prone to becoming dependent.

If you have used synthetic cannabinoids regularly you could find it difficult to stop using and you might experience psychological and physical withdrawals when you do stop. The withdrawals can include cravings for synthetic cannabinoids, irritability, mood changes, loss of appetite, weight loss, difficulty sleeping and even sweating, shaking and diarrhoea.



What are synthetic cannabinoids cut with?

Synthetic cannabinoids are usually sold in 'herbal' smoking mixtures. Sometimes these smoking mixtures have been found not to contain any synthetic cannabinoids at all!

Any dried herbs, vegetable matter or plant cuttings can be mixed or sprayed with synthetic cannabinoids to make smoking mixtures. A number of different plants are often listed on the packaging of smoking mixtures, but these might not actually be present in the mixture.

It's also possible that the dried herbs, vegetable matter or plant cuttings themselves may produce an unwanted effect or be covered in a toxic substance, such as a pesticide, or there may be residues of the solvents, such as acetone and methanol, used in the mixing/spraying process, remaining on the smoking mixture.

There have been a few studies carried out on the level of synthetic cannabinoids present in smoking mixtures which suggest that there can be differences in the concentration of synthetic cannabinoids in between different batches and packets. This could be because the mixing or spraying missed some of the smoking mixture or over-sprayed some of it.

The chemical composition of synthetic cannabinoids and the ingredients of smoking mixtures are changing all the time, so you can never be sure of what you're getting, how powerful it is, and how it could affect you.



The law

Class: Psychoactive Substances

- Some volatile substances are covered by the 2016 Psychoactive Substances Act, which means it's illegal to give away or sell
- There's no penalty for possession, unless you're in prison
- Supply and production can get you up to 7 years in prison, an unlimited fine or both

Like drink-driving, driving when high is dangerous and illegal. If you're caught driving under the influence, you may receive a heavy fine, driving ban, or prison sentence.

If the police catch people supplying illegal drugs in a home, club, bar or hostel, they can potentially prosecute the landlord, club owner or any other person concerned in the management of the premises.

Additional law details

Synthetic cannabinoids and the law

- Although some synthetic cannabinoids have been legal in the past, many have been illegal for some time. A large number of synthetic cannabinoids and any mixtures that contain illegal drugs, including brands like Black Mamba and Annihilation, are Class B drugs and are illegal to have, give away or sell
- It's important to realise that since 26 May 2016, when the Psychoactive Substances Act came into effect, none of these drugs are legal to produce, supply or import (even for personal use, e.g. over the internet) for human consumption
- The synthetic cannabinoids that were made illegal under the Misuse of Drugs Act, are still covered by that legislation. All other psychoactive substances not currently covered by the Misuse of Drugs Act now fall under the Psychoactive Substances Act



Spiced-laced vapes have been referred to as zombie vapes because of their severe adverse effects. Zombie vapes are regular e-cigarettes containing liquid mixed with synthetic cannabinoid receptors, also known as Spice.

How are zombie vapes different from other vapes?

These vapes are different from ordinary ones because of their ingredients. While regular vapes typically contain nicotine with different flavourings, zombie drug vapes are laced with synthetic marijuana.

What cases have there been involving these vapes?

Incidents involving Spice-laced vapes have been reported in various locations across the UK, including Manchester, Merseyside, Cheshire, Middlesbrough, Yorkshire, and Wales.

Last year (2023), dozens of vapes were confiscated from students in Middlesbrough, after several children began collapsing after using them. A number of the seized vapes were sent off for testing for class B substances like Spice.

There have been reports of Snapchat dealers advertising these Spice-laced vapes online.

Newspaper report 12/02/2024 UK:

Five children in south London have been hospitalised after smoking vapes containing synthetic cannabinoids also known as Spice. One of the children has been put in an induced coma, according to The Mirror. The teens from Eltham, South-East London, were said to have used a rechargeable vape pen called Vaporesso which contained Spice.

The Welsh Emerging Drugs and Identification of Novel Substances service (WEDINOS) revealed that almost a third of the 196 samples of liquids submitted to them in 2023 contained a class of chemicals which Spice belongs to.

It comes as the UK government confirmed the ban on disposable vapes last month to tackle the rise of young people vaping.



Vapes are electronic devices designed to allow people to inhale nicotine in a vapour. Using a vape is known as vaping. Vapes are also available without nicotine.

Also called:

- e-cigarettes
- e-cigs
- e-hookah
- e-liquids
- puff bars
- vape pens
- vape pods
- vape sticks

What do look they look like?

Vapes work by heating a solution (e-liquid) that typically contains propylene glycol, vegetable glycerine, flavourings and nicotine. This creates a vapour which is inhaled.

Vapes come in different shapes and sizes including:

- Vape bars – these are shaped like a highlighter pen and are usually disposable, but sometimes rechargeable and refillable with e-liquid capsules
- Compact pod devices – these are shaped like a flash drive or pebble and can be disposable or rechargeable and refillable with e-liquid capsules
- Vape pens – these devices contain a ‘tank’ that you can fill with an e-liquid of your choice with a replaceable coil and rechargeable battery
- Cigalikes – these are designed to look like cigarettes and can be disposable or rechargeable. E-liquids come in different nicotine strengths ranging from 0 mg/ml to 20 mg/ml and come in different flavours

There are also more sophisticated customisable devices with variable power, but these are used more by people who have been vaping for a long time.

How do people take them?

The vapour is inhaled then breathed out as a cloud. The size of the cloud depends on the device and e-liquid used.



How does it make you feel?

When you vape, the nicotine in the vape is what gives you the buzz. This feeling comes from a release of adrenaline which stimulates the body and causes your blood pressure and heart rate to increase, making you breathe faster. Nicotine also activates areas of your brain that are involved in producing feelings of pleasure and reward. If you haven't vaped nicotine before, you might feel one or more of the following effects:

- Dizziness
- Headache
- Racing heart
- Nausea/possible vomiting
- Stomach cramps
- Weakness

People who use nicotine regularly build up a tolerance to the immediate short-term effects so after a while you might feel:

- Mild stimulation
- Increased ability to concentrate
- Relaxation
- Temporary reduction in the urge to vape

Some of the side effects to vaping are:

- Coughing
- Dry mouth and throat
- Shortness of breath
- Mouth and throat irritation
- Headaches



Duration

Depending on the type of device and nicotine strength, the first effects begin within a few minutes and peak at 5 to 10 minutes after your first puff. The effects continue to increase while you use the vape and may carry on building for 5 to 10 minutes after your last puff, falling steadily over the next two to three hours.

Physical health risks

Nicotine vaping is recommended by the NHS as a way for adults to stop smoking. But it isn't recommended for non-smokers, especially children and young people under 18. Vaping is substantially less harmful than smoking but that doesn't mean it's harmless.

Smoking gives you nicotine by burning tobacco, which creates many harmful toxins that can cause serious illnesses including cancer, lung disease, heart disease and stroke.

Vaping gives you nicotine by heating e-liquid, which creates fewer toxins and at lower levels. In general, smokers who switch to vaping reduce their exposure to a wide range of toxic substances. This includes tar and carbon monoxide, very harmful compounds which are produced by cigarettes but not by vapes.

But vaping still exposes users to some toxins and we don't yet know what the risks might be in the longer term.

Nicotine is an addictive substance which can be hard to stop using once you've started. Also, nicotine may be riskier for young people than for adults – there's some evidence that in adolescence the brain is more sensitive to its effects. Nicotine is a toxin and poisoning can happen if larger doses are taken. Nicotine vaping products are covered by regulations to protect users, including maximum nicotine strength and bans on certain ingredients. But some disposable vapes on sale are illegal and don't meet UK quality and safety regulations. They might look like the real thing, but they aren't so it isn't possible to know what's actually in them. Non-nicotine vapes are not covered by the same regulations as nicotine vapes and are not without risk.



Addiction

Can you get addicted?

Nicotine is an addictive substance and you can become dependent on vapes, especially if you vape nicotine regularly.

Giving up nicotine can be difficult because the body has to get used to functioning without it. Withdrawal symptoms can include cravings, irritability, anxiety, trouble concentrating, headaches and other mental and physical symptoms.

The law

Class: Legal

Additional law details

In the UK it is illegal to sell nicotine vaping products to someone under the age of 18, or for adults to buy these products for them.



In the United Kingdom, county lines drug trafficking is the practice of trafficking drugs into rural areas and smaller towns, away from major cities.

Traffickers recruit vulnerable children, including children in pupil referral units (PRU) who have been excluded from school, as drug dealers. Some young people are recruited via "debt bondage", whereby they enter county lines to pay off drug debts. Others take part of their own volition, owing to boredom and a lack of legitimate opportunity in marginalized communities.

The term "county lines" refers to the phone numbers, or lines, dedicated to this activity. The practice is also known by those involved as "going country" or "going OT" ("outta town").

Scale

Between the years of 2018 to 2019, National Crime Agency figures showed there were 1,500 drug trafficking routes of this sort in the United Kingdom, rising to 3,000; in that year the agency estimated the total turnover of county lines activities throughout the UK to be roughly £500 million. A 2020 report for the Home Office by Professor Dame Carol Black states that the county lines drug trade involved 27,000 young people in the UK.

Causes

In 2019, Sadiq Khan, Mayor of London, blamed cuts in police numbers for the rise of county lines gangs.

Also, in 2019, police said that they lacked the resources to tackle County Lines. They mentioned cuts to youth services may have been a contributing factor. They mentioned it was difficult to get the funding.

A 2020 report for the Home by Professor Dame Carol Black traces the causes of the phenomenon to a combination of government cuts in youth services and drug recovery services, absence of parents, poor parenting, increased child poverty, school exclusions, and availability of pure forms of drugs.



‘County lines’ is a term used to describe gangs and organised criminal networks involved in exporting illegal drugs into one or more importing areas within the UK, using dedicated mobile phone lines or other form of “deal line”.

They are likely to exploit children and vulnerable adults to move and store the drugs and money and they will often use coercion, intimidation, violence (including sexual violence) and weapons.

The government is determined to crack down on the county lines gangs who are exploiting our children and have a devastating impact on our communities which is why in November 2019, the Home Office established the County Lines Programme to enhance the response to this threat.

Home Office programme

The County Lines Programme was launched by the Home Office in November 2019.

Our overall programme package includes:

- Expanding the National County Lines Co-ordination Centre (NCLCC)
- Increased disruption on the rail networks by the British Transport Police’s County Lines Taskforce
- Targeted operational activity against lines, including 4 major exporting force areas:
 - Greater Manchester Police
 - Metropolitan Police Service
 - Merseyside Police
 - West Midlands Police
- Investment in new technology including Automatic Number Plate Recognition
- Increased support for victims



Impact

Since the County Lines Programme launched in 2019:

- 5,165 county lines have been closed
- 15,623 people have been arrested
- 8,011 individuals have been referred by police to safeguarding

These figures are correct as of 11 December 2023.

Since April 2022, over 2,100 lines have been closed meaning the government has already surpassed its target to close 2,000 lines over the 3 years up to March 2025.



IN AN EMERGENCY

If you're with someone who needs medical help, call an ambulance and tell the crew everything you know about the drugs taken, it could save their life. If you have any drugs left, hand them over to the crew as it may help. In most circumstances they won't tell the police.

No one can be certain how drugs will affect them so there's always the risk they'll have a bad time, fall ill, hurt themselves or even worse.

Should you ever need to help someone who's having a bad reaction, here's what you need to know:

What to look out for

If someone is having a bad time on drugs they may be:

- Anxious
- Tense
- Panicky
- Overheated and dehydrated
- Drowsy
- Having difficulty with breathing

What to do

The first things you should do are:

- Stay calm
- Calm them and be reassuring - don't scare them or chase after them - always protect yourself
- Try to find out what they've taken
- Stay with them if possible



If they are anxious, tense or panicky you should:

- Sit them in a quiet and calm room
- Keep them away from crowds, bright lights and loud noises
- Tell them to take slow deep breaths
- Stay with them if possible

If they are really drowsy you should:

- Sit them in a quiet place and keep them awake
- If they don't respond or become unconscious call an ambulance immediately and place them in the recovery position
- Don't scare them, shout at them or shock them
- Don't give them coffee to wake them up
- Don't put them in a cold bath to "wake them up" – this wastes time and there's a risk of drowning

If they are unconscious or having difficulty breathing you should:

- Immediately phone for an ambulance
- Place them into the recovery position
- Stay with them until the ambulance arrives

If you know what drug they've taken tell the ambulance crew immediately, it might help them get the right treatment faster.

If you're with someone who needs medical help, call an ambulance and tell the crew everything you know about the drugs taken, it could save their life. If you have any drugs left, hand them over to the crew as it may help. In most circumstances they won't tell the police.



EDUCATION & AWARENESS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

Sessions usually last 1 hour

- Pre-Assessment
- Education & Awareness
- Lived Experience Story & Emotional Impact
- Post-Assessment

COUNSELLING & FAMILY SUPPORT

- One to one counselling/mental health first aid for the user and or their family
- Support for all those who may be misusing
- Support to any or all members of a family who are affected
- Counselling and support for those who may be trying to come to terms with bereavement
- Information and awareness about the dangers and consequences
- Misuse and how best to support the user
- Family mediation
- Signposting and referral to other relevant agencies or groups
- Support for those users not yet able to give up

Anyone requiring input is guaranteed to be seen within seven working days from initial contact.

Self or agency referrals by phone, video call, email or visit

All of the above services are free of charge



PROFESSIONAL/PARENT/GUARDIAN/CARER TRAINING

Aims & Objectives

Training is designed to provide an opportunity to develop understanding and an ability to respond to:

- VSA/Substance Misuse/Vaping/County Lines amongst young people and adults in a range of settings
- The impact of such misuse on the Individual, the Family and Community

By the end of the training, participants will have a good understanding of:

- The issues in relation to young people and VSA/Substance Misuse/Vaping/County Lines
- The prevalence of VSA/Substance Misuse/Vaping/County Lines
- What products are misused
- Possible reasons for misuse
- Methods of misuse
- The effects and consequences of VSA/Substance Misuse/Vaping/County Lines
- The signs and symptoms of misuse
- Knowledge of emergency action
- Legislation in relation to VSA/Substance Misuse/Vaping/County Lines
- Harm minimisation
- Where to access support

All of the above services are free of charge



YOUNG PERSONS ADVISORY GROUP (YPAG) - THE EVOLVER'S

We believe that youth participation is an integral part of our ongoing service development which is why we asked a group of young people from The Wirral, Merseyside, to become the first Young People's Advisory Group at Evolve.

We asked them to critique our young people's resources including educational presentations, leaflets & other marketing materials. In addition, they were asked to consider how we could create a greater awareness to VSA/Substance Misuse/Vaping/County Lines within their communities.

Since its inception the YPAG have been developing information literature for young people, and have raised thousands of pounds for Evolve. All of the resource development enables early identification, intervention, community awareness and support, all of which target social change through promoting increased awareness and education.

Many adults look on young people as problematic, whilst the media tend to emphasise troubled youth and the services they require, but so many of our young people are competent members of society who really can generate peer and community change.

Look to them ...

Evolve is proud to acknowledge the YPAG's ability to take ownership of making a difference within their communities.



CONTRIBUTIONS TO OUR SERVICE PROVISION

Although Evolve will always provide its services free of charge to those affected by VSA/Substance Misuse/Vaping/County Lines, any voluntary contribution really will make a difference and be most gratefully received... Please ask about our

MEMBERSHIP SCHEME

Thank you!



tackling the impact of substance misuse



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