# Concerns rise over 'pandemic level' ketamine use among Liverpool youth



Concerns are mounting over a significant increase in ketamine use in Liverpool and the surrounding areas, where it is being described as a 'pandemic level' crisis affecting the city's youth. Reports indicate that children as young as 12 are engaging with the drug, which has seen its user base in the UK double over the past five years. Border officials have reported an alarming rise in drug seizures, with instances rising from 1,337 in 2023 to 2,046 last year. Notably, Liverpool has been identified as the UK's primary hotspot for ketamine seizures, with busts occurring in Merseyside more than five times above the national average.

Ketamine users describe the drug as providing a dream-like state of detachment and invincibility. However, it comes with potential risks, including nausea, hallucinations, and chronic bladder issues, colloquially referred to as 'ket bladder,' which in severe cases may necessitate surgical removal of the bladder. The Liverpool Echo has reported a concerning narrative of addiction levels among local youth that are believed to be unprecedented in the area.

One local father, who wished to remain anonymous, spoke to the Echo about his 15-year-old son's struggles with ketamine addiction, expressing feelings of helplessness as he attempts to support his child. He shared, “He started hanging around with the wrong sort of crowd. Now he’s suffering a lot. He has cramps, he struggles to wee, and he's losing loads of weight.” The father highlighted the need for increased education and awareness regarding the dangers of ketamine use, adding, “The problem is as bad as the heroin crisis in the 1980s. It’s so widespread among the kids around here.”

Amidst the escalating situation, various organisations are stepping forward to address the rising trend of ketamine use. One such initiative is Oasis Recovery Runcorn, which is part of the UK Addiction Treatment Centres (UKAT) Group. Located on Bridge Street, the facility provides accommodation, medication, and therapy for those struggling with addiction. Staff at the centre anticipate a rising number of admissions from individuals grappling with ketamine abuse, which they believe has surged in frequency since the Covid-19 pandemic. Kerry Dare, the centre manager, stated, “I think, since covid, we have definitely had an increase of clients coming in with ketamine abuse,” noting that many of these individuals are female.

Both Kerry Dare and senior therapist Claire McGlynn have observed that while ketamine use was once an exception among their clientele, it has now become increasingly common. They suspect that factors such as lockdown-related boredom and frustration may have driven some young people to experiment with substances like ketamine, which is perceived as easier to conceal from parents due to its transient effects.

The issue has also reached the attention of local government officials. Councillor Lynnie Hinnigan, representing the Belle Vale ward, along with Councillor Harry Doyle, the Cabinet Member for Health, Wellbeing, and Culture, is set to propose a motion during next week’s full council meeting aimed at implementing proactive measures to mitigate ketamine-related harms among the youth. Hinnigan remarked, “Liverpool is known as being a city of resilience and strength, but we now face a growing threat to our kids,” pointing out the alarming prevalence of the drug and its accessibility among young people.

As part of the motion, there is a push for enhanced public health education in schools and increased funding for youth services to address existing issues related to ketamine misuse. The council aims to collaborate with Merseyside Police to intensify efforts against drug dealing in the area.

In remarks on the broader implications of ketamine use, Detective Inspector Ruth Tickle of Merseyside Police urged young individuals to educate themselves on the signs and impacts of the drug, reiterating the availability of support services for those in need.

As the crisis escalates, community resources like the Lifeboat Project, which focuses on supporting individuals with ketamine addiction, have emerged in response to this urgent public health challenge, emphasising the importance of compassionate support and education in tackling the problem. The ongoing developments surrounding ketamine use in Liverpool highlight a growing concern that will require coordinated efforts from healthcare providers, government officials, and community organisations to effectively address the issue and support those affected.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)