



**CPFT – Child & Adolescent  
Substance Use Service (CASUS)**

## **CASUS Spring/Summer Newsletter 2024**

Hello again!

Cambridgeshire Child and Adolescent Substance Use Service (CASUS) distribute school newsletters on a quarterly basis to update you on current trends and how we can help you to support your students regarding the use of drugs and alcohol.

- We do not operate a waiting list and do not have lower thresholds.
- CASUS provides support to young people (up to 18 years) who are getting into difficulties around substances. We are able to work with 18–21-year-olds (depending on complexity and need) and these will be reviewed on a case by case basis.
- We welcome referrals and are happy to announce that we have seen an increase in school referrals following a reduction over the last two years and have been recognised nationally as one of the best performing treatment services, for the rate at which our referrals have picked up since covid.
- Please feel free to call us for “*what if*” conversations if you have any reason to suspect use of drugs or alcohol, this may be the result of avoidant behaviour, a change in typical behaviour, language that suggests familiarity with substances, or direct disclosures.
- We have Duty Workers available Monday to Friday 9:00am to 5:00pm that can answer any questions or concerns you may have about a young person around drugs/and or alcohol.
- We do not need to go through a full assessment to meet a young person and if making a referral might feel too daunting to them, we can meet to informally discuss what we can offer, this can be a very effective ice breaker.

### **How we work with young people:**

- We typically work with young people on a weekly or fortnightly basis, either face to face (in school, one of our offices, or at home) via telephone or video calls, and the length of the treatment they receive may be as short as one or two sessions or in some cases several years.
- We complete a comprehensive assessment, agree a care plan and our work is informed by these goals.
- We do not tell young people to stop using substances, rather we give them the information they need to make informed decisions.

### **CASUS COSUP (Child of Substance Using Parent) Pathway:**

- CASUS has a wonderful new pathway which is developing well. The COSUP (Children of Substance Using Parents) Pathway offers support, information, advice, and specialized interventions to Cambridgeshire young people under the age of 18 who are impacted by a family member’s substance use. Every situation is unique and therefore the COSUP support will be tailored to an

individual's needs. Whilst there is no minimum age limit for COSUP support, younger children (primary school) will be discussed on a case-by-case basis and the COSUP support provided may be in the form of structured consultancy. Consent MUST be gained from the young person (if over 13) or parent/legal guardian (if under 13) for the COSUP referral to be accepted and support to be offered. Similar to our other pathways within CASUS, we can offer tailored support and education sessions to schools and professionals regarding COSUP specific advice/education. CASUS will accept COSUP referrals from young people themselves, parents, guardians, schools, family members, or any other person who has concerns for that young person being impacted by family substance use. Our COSUP referral form can be found alongside the other CASUS referral forms on the CPFT website under CASUS.

### **What we can offer schools**

- **PSHE:** we are here to support PSHE delivery, this is dependent on team capacity as our individual work with young people takes priority, but we are happy to discuss your needs, and have received positive feedback from schools we have worked with in the past. There will be a charge for this service from 2024 (available on request).
- **Structured Consultancy:** we recognise that for some young people additional professionals in their lives can be daunting, so we can guide existing workers to deliver substance use interventions by providing resources and supervision.
- **Vulnerable Groups:** if you have young people who you do not think need a referral for one-to-one work but might benefit from some education or early intervention we can come and deliver a session to a small group.

### **Current concerns:**

#### **Nitrous Oxide (NOS) Concerns**

- Laughing gas (NOS), often referred to as 'balloons' by young people (due to the way the gas is inhaled using a balloon) became illegal in the UK under the Misuse of Drugs Act in November 2023. It is a class C substance. People caught producing or selling nitrous oxide could face 14 years in prison under new rules.
- We continue to see young people using NOS and are concerned about the potential long term health risks related to it, as well as the immediate risks.
- There are increasing hospital reports of young people with serious nerve damage. Nitrous oxide inactivates vitamin B12 leading to serious and sometimes permanent nerve damage.
- For more information, please see the FRANK website [Nitrous Oxide | Laughing Gas | FRANK \(talktofrank.com\)](https://talktofrank.com)

#### **Pills being marketed and sold as 'prescription' drugs or substances such as ecstasy, when they actually contain other substances**

- We would like to take this opportunity to remind you that our young people are frequently buying substances that when tested turn out to not be what they think they are buying and contain other substances, this can be extremely dangerous and associated with overdose.
- There has been an influx of highly potent synthetic opioids being identified within the UK illicit drug supply, including those being sold as benzodiazepines (prescription sedative medication). Around 50% of benzodiazepines (including XANAX tablets) obtained without prescription are counterfeit.

- When it comes to experimenting with drugs, young people may not be buying what they think they are buying either over the internet or from the streets. We urge young people and parents to be extra vigilant.

### **Edibles containing THC/cannabis**

- There continues to be concerns around edibles containing THC/Cannabis disguised as sweets. The strength of these edibles cannot be known. Taking edibles may also increase the risk of taking something more dangerous than cannabis. There are increasing reports of young people taking what they think are cannabis edibles and getting seriously ill from them.

### **Disposable nicotine Vapes and Vapes being marketed as containing THC/cannabis**

- The government announced in January 2024 that the sale and supply of disposable vapes is being banned in England, Scotland and Wales because of their appeal to young people. They are also strengthening the regulation of vape flavours, packaging and how they are displayed in shops.
- CASUS do not provide support for young people using nicotine vapes, but frequently make referrals to the stop smoking service when young people want help with smoking or vaping. Local service details can be found here: [Healthy You - improving health across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough](#)
- CASUS are aware that vapes being purchased online by young people that contain unknown liquids. Sometimes they are marketed as containing THC but may not contain that at all. We have had instances of young people becoming unwell and having to attend A&E due to using unknown substances in a vape. Again, we urge young people and parents to be extra vigilant and make referrals to us as appropriate.

### **Ketamine**

- Ketamine is a substance that has been in the news a lot recently, due to the increasing prevalence of use and the health issues related to frequent use. CASUS are seeing an increase in the number of young people we are supporting around ketamine use, which is in line with national trends.
- Ketamine is a Class C drug. In medical setting, it is used as a general anaesthetic so it reduces sensations in the body.
- As a street drug it is bought as a grainy, off-white powder and snorted in most cases. Trips can last for a couple of hours. Taking ketamine can make people feel dream-like and detached, chilled, relaxed and happy and also confused and nauseated. 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.
- The long term risk related to Ketamine use is that it can cause serious bladder problems, with the urgent and frequent need to urinate. This can be very painful. Although stopping using ketamine can help, sometimes the damage can be so serious that the bladder needs surgical repair or even removal.

For more information please visit: [Ketamine | Effects of Ketamine | FRANK \(talktofrank.com\)](#)

## How to refer to CASUS:

### [New website](#)

CASUS have a new website. [CASUS, casus, Cambridgeshire child and adolescent substance use service, | CPFT NHS Trust](#)

You will find links to leaflets and resources on there, our referral form and details about the ways in which we work.

Referrals for one-to-one work can be made by using the referral form on the website. We will allocate within one week and can usually arrange an initial appointment within four weeks. Please return referrals to our CASUS email address below.

### **CASUS contact details.**

Tel: 01480 445316

Email: [casus@cpft.nhs.uk](mailto:casus@cpft.nhs.uk)

#### **CASUS Staff Team**

Dr Dickon Bevington – Child & Adolescent Consultant Psychiatrist (1 day a week only)

Bernie Constable – Team Manager/EMDR therapist

Laura Hutson – Senior Substance Misuse Practitioner

Michael Chouler – Senior Substance Misuse Practitioner

Sam Davies – Senior Substance Misuse Nurse

Veronica Jacquard- Senior Substance Misuse Nurse

Jacqueline Harmitt – Substance Misuse Practitioner

Jacqui Akasha – Substance Misuse Practitioner

Kelly French – Substance Misuse Practitioner

Lisa Chapman – CASUS Administrator

Ivy Constable – Therapy Dog

Daphne Davies- Trainee Therapy Dog