



Rise in Xanax use amongst Young People in Dorset

Police reports and referrals to REACH YP and YADAS for use of the sedative drug Xanax have been on the increase in Dorset. This is backed up by Government figures, which report a doubling of referrals for Xanax and other similar drugs, collectively known as benzodiazepines.

The drug, also known as Alprazolam, is being bought on the 'dark web' by dealers and being sold for as little as £1 per pill, which often come in a distinctive 'bar' shape (see above). Testing on the pills has shown many to contain genuine alprazolam with amounts often in excess of legitimately made pills of the same designs.

Although drugs of this type have a place in medicine for various conditions, including anxiety, insomnia, epilepsy and as a muscle relaxant, they can also be abused. This is often in the form of self medication for anxiety and insomnia or, when taken in large doses, to create an effect similar to drunkenness. This can be dangerous and lead to risk of overdose, especially when mixed other depressants, such as alcohol or opiates which can lead to trouble breathing and an increased risk of death.

Regular use of these drugs can lead to addiction, especially when not medically supervised and used in large doses for a long period of time. Once a person is addicted, withdrawal can be dangerous and shouldn't be done without medical supervision.

Cannabis is still the most common reason for referrals to Young People's services in Dorset in 2018

Cannabis has continued to be the most common drug leading to referrals to REACH YP and YADAS throughout 2018, being the primary substance for 53% of young people.

With the expansion of the services to include 18-25 year-olds, referrals for other substances including cocaine, MDMA and alcohol have increased and cannabis has reduced from 73% last year.

The rise in the abuse of Xanax and other Benzodiazepines can also be seen as they now represent 5% of cases while being the primary drug in no young people in 2017.

What is Xanax?

- ⇒ A benzodiazepine tranquiliser related to diazepam (Valium) and temazepam
- ⇒ It is used in the USA and many other countries to treat anxiety but it's only available by private prescription in the UK.
- ⇒ It is a class C drug. Regular use can lead to both physical and psychological dependence.
- ⇒ Benzos impact the user's brain and central nervous system to create a sense of calm. Xanax and other benzos work by increasing the effects of GABA, which is a chemical found naturally in our bodies
- ⇒ Symptoms of Xanax use includes: Drowsiness, Sleeping for extended periods of time, Cognitive impairment, Sluggishness, Nausea or vomiting, Headache, Dry mouth, Slurred speech, Vertigo, Impaired coordination & Weakness
- ⇒ When dependent, stopping can cause severe withdrawal symptoms, including seizures, and is potentially fatal.

