

Chemsex Infosheet

This guide is designed for students' unions, to provide you with further information about chemsex and how you can work with services in your local community to support students to access advice and take steps to improve their safety when engaging in chemsex

What is Chemsex?

Chemsex is engagement in sexual activity, usually by men who have sex with men (MSM), under the influence of drugs such as crystal methamphetamine, mephedrone and GHB/GBL. These drugs are commonly known as 'chems'.

There are a number of risks associated with this practice, including impacts on an individual's mental or physical health. In addition, MSM who engage in Chemsex face increased stigma which may further compound these problems and wider wellbeing issues which are associated with the stigma attached to being LGBT+.

NUS believes that it is of paramount importance that students who choose to engage in this practice can do so free from judgement and shaming, and should be easily able to access help and advice to help them keep safe.

Students' unions play a key role in making sure their students are able to access the support and information they need to take measures to improve their safety whilst engaging in chemsex. This is particularly the case because sexual health services are often delivered locally, and students' unions act as a key representatives for students in their local community.

This briefing will provide you with further information about chemsex and advice for how students' unions can effectively reach out to students engaging in chemsex to ensure they are able to access the help and support of community sexual health services.

Where can I find out more information about chemsex?

There is additional information freely available online where you can find out more about Chemsex. It is important that students are aware of the risks associated and steps they can take to keep safe. Here is where you can find out more:

- The term Chemsex was originally coined by David Stuart; you can read his blog [here](#)
- [56 Dean Street](#) is a specialist NHS sexual health service which offers a variety of information about Chemsex
- [LGBT Foundation](#) is a national charity which offers a variety of information about Chemsex

What can students' unions do?

We want to make sure that students engaging in chemsex are able to access advice and support services to minimise risks and help keep themselves safe. We are encouraging students' unions to work on their campuses and in their local



communities to ensure that safety information is readily available and students are aware of local support services. We are encouraging students' unions to achieve this by working collaboratively on their campuses and with services and groups in their local communities.

What services are available to help students?

National:

- The Terence Higgins Trust run [a campaign called Friday/Monday](#), where you can find tips on how to keep safe when using GBL
- GMFA, a specialist gay men's health charity, have an [online guide to dealing with blackouts](#), which may occur when using chems

Blackpool

- [Drugline Lancs](#) have specialist advisors available to talk to about Chemsex

Yorkshire

- [Mesmac](#) is a specialist sexual health organisation which offers and variety of information and support services regarding Chemsex

London

- [Men R Us](#) have put together a list of a variety of sources of Chemsex advice and support services available throughout London
- [56 Dean St](#) are an NHS sexual health clinic which offer advice and support for a variety of issues related to Chemsex
- [London Friend](#) is an LGBT+ charity which offers specialist advice on drug use for LGBT+ people
- [Royal Free London NHS Trust](#) have specialist advisers you can speak to about Chemsex
- [Chemcheck](#) is a group programme for MSM who want support with or want to change their use of chems

Brighton

- [The Terence Higgins Trust in Brighton](#) offer specialist advice on Chemsex

Liverpool

- [Coast](#) is a specialist service for MSM who engage in Chemsex in Liverpool

Manchester

- [The Northern](#) is a specialist sexual health service in Manchester

What should I do now?

- Think about how you might get this information out to students engaging in chemsex, so that they are aware of the steps they can take to keep safe. Consider reaching out to your LGBT+ society, sexual health or wellbeing society that you have on campus: is there a joint campaign you can run together to raise awareness of this issue?
- Identify local services in your area that can support students affected by the impacts of chemsex. Do you have any local sexual health services that can support students? Can you point students in their direction or work together to promote greater uptake of services?
- Identify if any national health services or charities are working on this locally, do they have any existing campaigns or projects that students might benefit from you being a part of?
- Identify any local community or activist groups that might also be engaging in this issue. Is there a local LGBT+ group that you could collaborate with?