

Dear Parents and Carers

Recent warm weather, light nights and the approaching summer, school holidays has raised the anxiety of Redcar and Cleveland Borough Councils' substance misuse service for young people, CREST.

CREST who work with young people who use drugs and/or alcohol, have been made aware through their one to one work with young people that large groups of young people meet in local parks and open spaces.

Popular venues include local beaches, Saltburn Valley Gardens and Woods, Locke Park, Redcar Seafront, Errington woods, Guisborough Forest, Eston Nab/Hills and open spaces between Marske and Redcar.

Often young people tell parents or carers that they are 'just hanging out', staying at friends' homes or going camping with friends. Parents allow them to stay out late or overnight believing that they are safe.

Children of mixed ages from 13 to young adults attend these gatherings. Drugs and alcohol appear to be easily available.

CREST's concerns are:

- Young people are using drugs and alcohol. CREST knows that Alcohol, Cannabis and Ecstasy are being consumed in worryingly large quantities. Over recent years the strength of these drugs has increased. CREST has real concerns that these stronger, more potent drugs could cause harm to young people who may not know how much and what they are taking.
- Large numbers of young people (up to 60) congregating in isolated areas. Children who are under the influence of substances can easily become separated from friends or get themselves in to situations which they find difficult to get out of.
- Young people who are under the influence of drugs and or alcohol are at greater risk getting involved in risk taking behaviours such as unsafe sex, anti-social behaviour, vandalism, cold water swimming and climbing.

Advice to parents:

- Always check with your child's friend's parents or carers to ensure that your child is staying somewhere safe and with adequate supervision.
- Do not buy children alcohol or give children money which could be used to buy drugs or alcohol, Drugs and alcohol able to cause serious harm can cost as little as £3.
- Keep in regular contact with your child via mobile phone. Ensure their phone is always fully charged.
- Consider using a family locator GPS tracker on your child's phone.
- If your child does not return home at an agreed time report them missing to the police.

If you have any concerns for your child's wellbeing or require further information please contact your school or request some confidential advice from Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council, First Contact telephone number 01642 771500 .

Staff from the CREST service are available to discuss your concerns around young people using substances or to offer help and support to young people.

Yours sincerely,

CREST.