

NEWSLETTER
ISSUE 17

pink Elephant

KETAMINE



**Athlone
Drug
Awareness
Group**

KETAMINE

What is Ketamine?

Ketamine is classified as a dissociative and psychedelic drug. In medical settings, it is used as an anaesthetic for both humans and animals. When used recreationally, it can produce feelings of relaxation, euphoria, stimulation, and at higher doses intense dissociation or hallucinations.



Also known as: Ket, K, Special K, Keta, Horse Tranquiliser, Vitamin K.

Ketamine is most commonly found as a grainy off-white powder, though it may also appear in pill form or as a medical-grade liquid.

Common methods of use:

- **Snorted as a powder**
- **Swallowed in drinks or “bombs”**
- **Injected** (*rare and high-risk; strongly discouraged*)

Short-Term Effects:

The effects of ketamine vary depending on the dose, environment, and the user’s physical and mental state.

- **Relaxation or a feeling of calm**
- **Increased energy or stimulation**
- **“Out-of-body” or detached sensations**
- **Hallucinations or altered perception**
- **Nausea, vomiting** (*especially when combined with alcohol*)
- **Stomach discomfort**
- **Impaired coordination and balance**

Long-Term Effects:

Regular or heavy use of ketamine can contribute to significant long-term health concerns, including:

- **Mental Health**
- **Low mood**
- **Symptoms of depression**
- **Bladder & Urinary Tract Damage**

Emerging evidence links sustained ketamine use with bladder and urinary tract injury.

Symptoms may include:

- **Cramping or abdominal pain**
- **Frequent urination**
- **Difficulty urinating**
- **Blood in urine**

Anyone experiencing these symptoms should seek medical support and mention any ketamine use.

NEW ALERT: STRONGER, UNPREDICTABLE KETAMINE ANALOGUES

In Ireland, drugs sold as ketamine may instead contain ketamine analogues - newer, designer drugs made to mimic ketamine's effects. These substances can be far stronger, last longer, and produce more intense or harmful effects.

Examples of ketamine analogue:

- Methoxetamine (MXE, mexy, M-ket)
- Fluorodeschloroketamine (2-FDCK, FDCK, 2-F Ket)
- Deschloro-N-ethyl-ketamine (O-PCE, DNEK)

Risks associated with these substances:

- Stronger sedation or dissociation
- More intense confusion or anxiety
- Longer-lasting, less predictable effects
- Increased risk when mixed with other drugs or alcohol

You cannot identify an analogue visually.
A small amount could have a serious effect.

Ketamine: Key Information & Health Risks

Ketamine use in Ireland has risen sharply, prompting concern from addiction services and the HSE.

Ketamine has become a prominent part of the recreational drug scene, often used with other club drugs at festivals, parties, and among students.

Surveys show high levels of use: 63% of festival-goers (2019), 16% of higher-education students (DUHEI 2021), and 23% of Irish respondents in the European Web Survey on Drugs.

The HSE notes that ketamine use in Ireland is higher than in most participating European countries.

Information from [drugs.ie](https://www.drugs.ie) – Ketamine Drug Information
(<https://www.drugs.ie/drugtypes/drug/ketamine>)
HSE Ketamine Update 2025 ([drugs.ie/hse_ketamine_update_2025](https://www.drugs.ie/hse_ketamine_update_2025))
https://www.drugs.ie/hse_ketamine_update_2025
Drugnet Ireland, Issue 89, Autumn 2024, pp. 49-50
<https://www.drugsandalcohol.ie/42114/>

SCHOOL TABLE QUIZ

The School Table Quiz, held on 12th March 2025 in Athlone Community College, was an enjoyable and successful evening. The event brought students together in a relaxed and friendly setting, combining fun, teamwork, and learning, with €400 in prizes adding to the excitement. Beyond the competition, the quiz provided a positive social environment while reinforcing important messages around making informed and healthy choices. We would like to thank everyone who took part, helped organise the event, and supported its success, making it a great example of how meaningful conversations can be encouraged through inclusive community activities.



HANDCRAFTED CHESS BOARDS PRESENTATION

We were pleased to attend the presentation from this year's Stepping Out programme, where a collection of handcrafted chess boards and pieces were presented to local schools. Following the success of this event in previous years, it was wonderful to see the initiative continue and evolve, once again bringing together programme participants, educators, and invited guests to celebrate its positive impact.



Stepping Out is an Athlone-based vocational training programme, supported by the Athlone Drug Awareness Group, with participants completing a meaningful project each year. Responding to the growing interest in chess among younger pupils, this year's project focused on creating bespoke chess sets for schools across the area. The care, skill, and creativity involved were evident in every piece.

We were delighted to be involved in an initiative that strengthens community connections while promoting learning, focus, and wellbeing through chess. Our thanks to everyone involved in delivering another successful Stepping Out project, which continues to make a positive and lasting contribution to local schools and the wider community.



ATHLONE AC HALF MARATHON AND 10KM RACES

We were delighted to support the Athlone AC Half Marathon and 10K in September 2025 as one of the event sponsors. It was a fantastic day with a great turnout and a brilliant atmosphere throughout. Our thanks to Athlone Athletics Club, Chairperson Martina Connell, and the dedicated volunteers whose hard work ensured such a well-organised and successful event.

Congratulations to all the runners who took part - we were proud to be involved.



GATEWAY YOUTH PROJECT

Gateway Youth Project is a partnership between Athlone Community Taskforce (ACT) and Foróige. We work with young people from the age of 10 to 24, with most of our participants coming in the 10 – 17 age group. As we are a targeted youth project we aim to work with young people who are at risk of exclusion. This could be for many different reasons, such as being an early-school leaver, being a newly arrived immigrant or refugee, processing trauma, dealing with drug/alcohol use or addiction issues either personally or in the family, as well as many other issues. We engage in many different activities and programmes throughout the year, for example after-school support hub, one-to-one help, photography, dance, art, animation, self-defence, first aid, forest school, bike repair, cookery, day trips and more. We like to have a healthy integrated approach meaning our groups will have young people in them from many different backgrounds. Our aim is that we help all our young people in the Project gain the tools to reach their potential, that they gain positive social relationships and they feel happy, healthy and engaged in our local community in Athlone.



Gateway Mural - Saoirse (produced by our young people under guidance by artist Mimi Seery)

BENEFACTORS AT BUCCANEERS RFC DOUBLE HEADER



In October 2025, we were proud to be selected as benefactors for Buccaneers Rugby Football Club's exciting double-header event at Dubarry Park. The event drew a great crowd and provided a fantastic platform to raise awareness of our work and share information from our stand. It was an uplifting day that showcased the strong sense of community around Buccaneers RFC and the positive impact of local support.

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