

## **Epping Forest Youth Council Gateway Drug Awareness Poster Campaign 13 August 2018**

The Epping Forest Youth Council launched their latest project about raising awareness about Gateway Drugs.

Following on from the Youth Consultation at the Epping Forest Youth Conference 2017, 80 young people deemed drugs as one of the major issues facing young people in the district, the Youth Councillors took to the car parks and cleaned up over 550 laughing gas canisters in Epping Forest, Traps Hill, Loughton and Cornmill Lane, Waltham Abbey.

Quote from Cllr Helen Kane, Portfolio Holder for Leisure & Community Services.....

“It is important young people understand the serious health risks the substance can pose. Nitrous oxide can be very dangerous when misused.”

Youth Councillor Nina Honey said:

“The amount of canisters we found whilst out and about is worrying and it shows laughing gas is a real issue for young people today. Through our drug awareness project we hope to highlight the risks and make young people aware of the damage they are doing.”

Our Drug Awareness Campaign, includes a poster designed by Youth Councillor Annabelle Yaman called ‘Don’t Open the Gate to Gateway Drugs’, the poster is displayed on the rear of five Arriva buses that will travel across the county, passing through **Buckhurst Hill, Loughton, Debden, Epping Forest, St Margaret’s, Upshire and Waltham Abbey** for 3 months. So look out for the buses with the EFYC Poster.

The Youth Councillors have also surveyed over 3,000 pupils from the Epping Forest district secondary schools, they asked questions to identify

- Young people’s understanding of drugs
- What drugs they have tried
- What made them try them
- Peer pressure
- Curiosity or boredom

The findings will be released later this month, and will be available to Members, the Police and Health Services.

The Home Office has found Nitrous Oxide (N<sub>2</sub>O) more commonly known as laughing gas, to be the second most popular recreational drug among 16 to 24 year olds in England and Wales. Nitrous oxide is not a controlled drug, and has legitimate uses in medicine and dentistry. Under the Intoxicating Substances (Supply) Act 1985, it is illegal to sell to under 18s when the seller believes the substance may be inhaled for the purposes of intoxication. While it is not illegal for an adult to inhale the gas, many authorities across Britain are concerned about its use.

Through the Epping Forest Youth Council, local young people are given a democratic voice and are able to influence the decisions that directly affect their lives. Through consulting with their peers, Youth Councillors over the years have developed and delivered a range of project work covering themes such as; the promotion of local activities for young people, personal safety awareness, drugs education, youth volunteering and positive mental health campaigns.

If you would like more information about the work of the Youth Council or would like to get in touch with a Youth Councillor about an issue please contact Diane Gilson-Butler on 01992 564 365 [efyc@eppingforestdc.gov.uk](mailto:efyc@eppingforestdc.gov.uk)