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# Students given kits to test their illegal drugs for contamination

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Students at a leading British university are being offered testing kits to check illegal drugs in an experiment seeking to reduce risks from adulterated substances.

Testing kits have been made available to students at Newcastle University for £3 each via its students' union, for the first time on a British campus.

The kits, supplied by an organisation seeking to liberalise drugs laws, enable students to test the content of drugs such as Ecstasy or ketamine.

They contain chemicals that change colour on contact with different substances, and users can check the result against a colour chart which will show if a drug contains active ingredients or has been adulterated with potentially

harmful substances. It will only indicate whether certain chemicals within types of drugs are present and not their degree of purity.

The kits have been made available to students at well below their retail price by a local branch of Students for Sensible Drug Policy UK, a pressure group that wants to legalise and regulate the supply of drugs.

Newcastle University softened its policy on drugs last year, dropping a zero tolerance approach under which students found with illegal substances in university accommodation were immediately evicted. Instead students caught for the first time are interviewed and their eviction is suspended. They are thrown out for a second offence.

Holly Mae Robinson, president of SSDP Newcastle, said issuing testing

kits was the next step towards a more progressive approach to drugs at the university. "We are not promoting drug use. It's trying to avoid the harm of people that are going to use them," she said. "People are always going to use drugs and we just want to make it safer."

Luke Allison, Newcastle students' union welfare and equality officer, welcomed the initiative. He said: "If you don't acknowledge that students take drugs or that anyone in society takes drugs, then you're ignoring them and if you're ignoring them their problem is going to continue."

A Newcastle University spokesman said: "The university does not condone any illegal activity ... Nevertheless, we recognise that some students do use, or plan to use, drugs and would strongly encourage them to seek support."