

## **Parents Information - Drugs**

### **The use of drugs within Leicester, Leicestershire & Rutland (LLR)**

As with the rest of the country, there are no communities within Leicester, Leicestershire & Rutland which have not been impacted by illegal drugs. Drugs do not discriminate and people from every background will use drugs for a variety of reasons, initially this may be to aid relaxation and sociability or even to self-medicate for physical or mental health issues or even as a coping mechanism to deal with trauma. A small number of these users will go on to become dependent upon substances, needing to use them daily to function.

It's important that we emphasise the fact that the use of these drugs is not the social-norm, and **those who chose to use illegal substances are in the minority**. Best estimates would suggest that only around 1 in 10 people over the age of 18 have used an illegal substance within the last year.

Increasingly, the issue of drug use is being viewed as a healthcare issue rather than one for criminal justice agencies such as the police. Leicestershire Police continue to invest significant resources into disrupting the supply of illegal drugs into our 2 counties and proactively target those who deal within our communities, including those who seek to exploit the young and the vulnerable as part of their operation.

For the users of these substances, we increasingly work with local treatment services and continually develop our own working practices, policies and systems in an attempt to intervene as early as possible and divert people towards treatment where possible. Ultimately each person who addresses problematic use or overcomes addiction and enters long term recovery diminishes our local drugs market, this benefits us all within the wider community.

### **Drug use and young people**

Many young people will at some time come in to contact with illegal or controlled substances, this can be in the form of the underage drinking of alcohol, or experimentation with drugs.

Nationally around 1 in 4 secondary school age children have taken an illegal drug within the last 12 months.

In consideration of this, Leicestershire Police visit many schools throughout the academic year to facilitate Drug Awareness workshops. This is in no way a reflection of any substance misuse or related activity taking place at the school, but rather the school taking a responsible, preventative, pro-active approach to this subject and addressing an educational need.

We try to approach this subject in a sensitive and balanced fashion, avoiding the use of scare-tactics and instead seeking to present some simple facts and explanations of risks and

the law, whilst also seeking to address any myths or misconceptions amongst the young people who attend.

Through this education we hope that young people will have the knowledge and understanding to make informed choices when it comes to drugs.

### **Common signs & indicators of drug use**

Detecting drug use, particularly amongst young people can be challenging, the following are some general warning signs we recommend being aware of;

- Bloodshot eyes, or pupils larger or smaller than usual
- Sudden weight loss or weight gain
- A deterioration of physical appearance or personal grooming habits
- Unusual smells on breath, body or clothing
- Tremors, slurred speech or impaired coordination
- A drop, in school attendance or performance
- A sudden change in friends and interests
- Frequently getting into trouble, such as fights or accidents
- Lack of motivation or appearing lethargic
- Periods of unusual hyperactivity or agitation

### **Talking to young people about drug use**

Most young people will never take drugs, but many still have questions about them which they struggle to find answers to, often relying upon their peers or the internet for information. These sources are not always reliable so we would encourage creating an environment where a young person feels that they can approach parents regarding this issue. Some good advice for parents is to;

1. **Don't panic** - if you find out that your child has tried drugs, your first reaction may be one of anger or panic. Wait until you're calm before discussing the matter, show care and concern rather than anger and judgement which may shut any conversation or future disclosure down.
2. **Do your homework** - Make sure you know enough to discuss the issue in an informed way, there are many websites with a wealth of reliable information (many listed within this document).
3. **Avoid 'scare tactics'** - Young people will often know more about drugs than you may think, so it's pointless to say something along the lines of "Smoking Cannabis will kill you!"... pointing out that Cannabis can worsen mental health, especially if you start smoking in your teens may be more of a deterrent. Scare or shock tactics are often counterproductive.
4. **Be Realistic** - Only a minority of young people will ever experiment with drugs, an even smaller proportion of those who experiment will develop something which could be referred to as a drug problem.

## Support within Leicester, Leicestershire & Rutland

Turning Point are our locally commissioned Drug & Alcohol treatment service. As part of this service provision, Turning Point have a dedicated Young Persons Team, working with those under the age of 25.



Turning Point are a free and confidential service working with those who want support to stop or control drug or alcohol use, providing tailored support, working towards an agreed care plan.

Those seeking help can make contact directly, or a referral can be made on behalf of someone else with their consent. A recovery worker will then make contact to arrange an appointment.

Phone: 0330 303 6000

Online: [wellbeing.turning-point.co.uk/leicestershire](http://wellbeing.turning-point.co.uk/leicestershire)

## Further Information

It's important that we don't just rely upon hearsay when it comes to issues such as drugs, it's vital that we use, and recommend trusted sources of information, the following are worth visiting for further information.



Frank is a support service that provides information about drugs plus advice for those using drugs, as well as parents/carers.

[www.talktofrank.com](http://www.talktofrank.com)



Adfam has local support groups and helpful information for families affected by drugs and alcohol.

[www.adfam.org.uk](http://www.adfam.org.uk)



Drug Science is the leading independent scientific body on drugs in the UK, working to provide clear, evidence-based information without political or commercial interference.

[www.drugscience.org.uk](http://www.drugscience.org.uk)