

Drug Prevention - Advice for Parents

Over the past 12 months the Police and local support workers have become increasingly concerned that a number of young people living in the Horsham District and attending local secondary schools, are being Criminally Exploited. The Police and local support services are keen to identify any young people who may be involved and are looking to staff in schools to report any concerns that they may have.

Types of drugs

Drugs can be thought in terms of the effects they have:

Stimulants such as Ecstasy, amphetamine, cocaine and crack cocaine increase alertness, attention and energy

Hallucinogenics such as mephadrone, LSD and magic mushrooms cause hallucinations and changes in thoughts, emotions and consciousness

Depressants such as cannabis, Xanax, alcohol, nitrous oxide, Ketamine depress or reduce arousal or stimulation that slows down your brain and your body's responses

Cannabis is still the most widely used and easily available drug in the Horsham District. Most young people will be aware of who they can obtain it from and most young people are likely to be offered it or find themselves in the presence of members of their peer group who smoke it.

What is the harm?

Health

All drugs can affect a young person's health in different ways. Some effects are from long term use, such as liver, kidney and heart problems. There are also immediate risks, such as overdose. Taking drugs may also lead to having a mental health illness.

Financial

Drugs aren't necessarily expensive. Household products such as glue and aerosols are cheap and the price of Ecstasy can be less than a pint of lager. However, frequent or daily drug use can get people in debt.

Social

For some people, drugs are a way of bonding with friends. Drug use can start to take over their life and damage their relationships. There is the risk that friendships based around drug use will make it more difficult for some people to stop using them.

Personal safety

If your child is 'off their head' they are more vulnerable to assault. When they take drugs they are more likely to make decisions they'll regret and be at an increased risk of being involved in an accident.

Criminal Exploitation

What is Criminal Exploitation?

The following note uses information taken from Home Office Guidance '*Criminal Exploitation of children and vulnerable adults: County Lines Guidance*' July 2017 and gives a brief explanation of how young people may become criminally exploited; the signs to look out for, and what to do if you suspect one of your pupils may be involved.

County lines is the police term for urban gangs supplying drugs to suburban areas and market coastal towns using dedicated mobile phone lines.

It involves **child criminal exploitation** as gangs use children and vulnerable people to move drugs and money.

County lines is a major, cross-cutting issue involving drugs, violence, gangs, safeguarding, criminal and sexual exploitation, modern slavery and missing persons.

County lines activity and the associated violence, drug dealing and exploitation has a devastating impact on young people, vulnerable adults and local communities.

One of the key factors found in most cases of county lines exploitation is the presence of some form of exchange eg. carrying drugs in return for something. Where it is the victim who is offered, promised or given something they need or want, the exchange can include both tangible (such as money, drugs or clothes) and intangible rewards (such as status, protection or perceived friendship or affection).

Signs to look out for that may indicate a young person's involvement in county lines:

- Persistently going missing from school or home
- Unexplained acquisition of money, clothes or mobile phones
- Excessive receipt of texts/phone calls
- Relationships with controlling/older individuals or groups
- Leaving home / care without explanation
- Suspicion of physical assault / unexplained injuries
- Parental concerns
- Carrying weapons
- Significant decline in school results / performance
- Gang association or isolation from peers or social networks
- Self-harm or significant changes in emotional wellbeing

What you can do to help your child stay safe:

- Most young people would trust their parents out of range of authority figures – including the police and teachers. Your opinions do matter to them, even if it doesn't seem like it sometimes!
- Don't leave them to pick up information from their friends or TV. It's likely that your child trusts you – even if they don't show it. You're the right person to talk to them about drugs. Give them accurate information, and make sure they know your views, so they know where they stand with you.
- Find out the facts about drugs before you start the conversation.

- Think about how you will react if they say they have used drugs.
- Don't make assumptions about what they know or do.
- If they say they've used drugs, stay calm and don't panic.
- If they say they don't but you think they're lying, don't accuse them.
- Pick a good time to talk – not before they rush off to school. Or, if they are using drugs
- Use opportunities to talk - stories in the media about drugs can be useful springboards for a conversation. Using these opportunities may mean that your child doesn't feel like they're being accused of anything.
- Listen with respect to what they have to say.
- Don't lose your temper if you disagree with your child's opinions. It might make them rebel more.
- Let them know that you're there for them.
- Set boundaries - Make it clear what your house rules are so they know what you will and won't accept.
- Call on your friends - If you or your child are too embarrassed to talk, why not ask someone close to speak to them.

Where to go for more support

There are lots of resources available online. We've picked out a few local and national sources of support:

Change Grow Live (CGL) – West Sussex Children and Young People's Drug and Alcohol Wellbeing Service	Confidential treatment and support for young people aged up to 24 years. Young people are offered appointments at a venue which suits them and drop-ins are held around the county, including FindItOut Centres.	www.changegrowlive.org/young-people/young-peoples-services 0300 303 8677 Email wsypsms@cgl.org.uk Text 0777 933 9954
The Cool Spot	Online information on alcohol for young teens.	www.thecoolspot.gov
Frank	Contains A-Z information on the effects and associated risks of drug use.	0300 123 6600 www.talktofrank.com Email frank@talktofrank.com
AdFam	Information for families on coping strategies, how to speak to young people about drugs and general information about drugs.	www.adfam.org.uk AdFam support group (Crawley) 0300 028 8888

Drug Wise UK	Promotes A-Z evidence-based research on drugs, alcohol and tobacco.	www.drugwise.org.uk
KFX	Drugs education resources and tools to help people who use drugs or for their family and friends.	www.kfx.org.uk Email mail@kfx.org.uk
Netmums	Provides online support on all parenting issues in a friendly, supportive, non-judgemental environment.	www.netmums.com
Young Minds	The Young Minds service is aimed at parents or carers concerned about the behaviour, mental health or emotional wellbeing of a child or young person.	www.youngminds.org.uk