

Drug and Alcohol Misuse

"At first I thought it was just a teenage thing. Paul started to come home late, a row always started and he'd storm off to his room. He was losing weight, looked terrible and I felt he was lying to us. He just wanted to be out all the time."

- Many parents worry that their child may use drugs
- Prevention is better than cure
- Drug use is increasing among young people
- Make sure you know about drugs and their possible effects
- Talk to your children about drugs from a young age
- Bradford schools teach drug prevention in the curriculum

How would I know?

If you find out that your child has or may have taken drugs, it can be frightening because of the potential effects. This can be due to your lack of knowledge about drugs and not feeling confident about talking about them. Most young people who experiment with drugs do not go on to use them on a permanent basis. Therefore addiction, crime and death are not as usual as the stories in the media can lead us to believe.

It is vitally important, however, that children are aware of the risks of using drugs, alcohol and volatile substances (e.g. solvents). More young people experience problems caused by too much drinking than through drug use.

Drug use among young people - how widespread is it?

Drugs are more widespread among children and young people than ever before.

Research shows that about one in twelve 12 year olds and one in three 14 year olds have tried drugs. By the time they reach 16 years of age, two in every five young people will have tried one type of drug or a mixture of drugs. These figures apply across all ethnic groups, whilst drug use is increasing amongst girls.

It is important to discuss drugs use early. Some parents/carers worry that doing this encourages their child to use drugs. Avoiding talking about drugs will not protect them. Children will be aware of drugs in some way before they leave primary school. It is likely that at this early stage, children will be more responsive to being told about the risks of drug use. Make sure you tell your children about the risks. Accurate information and support will help them decide what to do. It does not guarantee non-use but will increase the chance of an informed choice.

Why do young people use drugs?

They are curious about them, they want to break the rules, to relax, to escape reality, to cope with difficult situations or feelings, because they enjoy them, because their friends do it.

How would I know?

There are many telltale signs, which include a young person who is panicky, tense or drowsy, complaining of sickness, has impaired concentration, lack of energy, depression, skin problems or aggression.

There may be a change in relationships with family and friends, a change in behaviour, or a change in performance at school.

Other signs can involve changes in a financial situation and personal possessions 'disappearing' and being sold.

Drug and alcohol misuse by parents

Drug and alcohol misuse by the adults in a household can seriously affect the care and wellbeing of children. Advice can be obtained from The Bridge Project, Tel. 01274 723863.

WARNING SIGNS

In general terms if your child's appearance, behaviour or financial situation changes dramatically you should include drug and alcohol use in your list of "I wonder if..." questions.

ACTION

Observe and talk to your child if you are worried. In an emergency contact an ambulance immediately. If your child is not in immediate danger talk with them about their drug use at another time when they are not using.

WHAT TO SAY

Use every opportunity to discuss drug use, for example, when drugs are mentioned in a television programme. You can give accurate information regarding the risks of drug use at an early age.

PREVENTION

Ensure that you are informed about drug use and the effects of different types of drugs. There are many helpful guides available from the helplines listed.

CONTACTS

- Project 6 - 01535 610180
- Maternities and Families Project 01535 610180
- Piccadilly Project 01274 735775
- National Drugs Helpline 24 Hrs free advice FRANK 0800 77 66 00
- Information Shop for Young People 01274 432431
- Alcohol Counselling & Preventative Services (ACAPS) www.acaps.co.uk 020 7737 3579
- Off the Record 01274 733080
- The Bridge Project 01274 723863

*Check the Bradford ACPC website for the latest phone numbers:
www.bradford-acpc.com*