

LETS TALK ABOUT.....

DRUGS AND ALCOHOL.....



YOUR QUESTIONS ANSWERED!

Firstly, don't panic! We've put this newsletter together not because our schools have seen a rise in the numbers of young people who become involved in substance use (these remain low) but because we want parents/carers to be informed and feel supported.

We wanted to try and answer some of your questions and concerns and also to explain how a young person can be supported to make changes.

Why do some young people get involved with drugs?

Most young people who experiment with drugs do so out of curiosity. Often after a brief dabble young people will decide it's not for them, that they don't like the way drugs make them feel and refocus on what's important to them. Some however go on to use drugs recreationally in the same way that many adults use alcohol. Drugs become part of socializing and as a young person matures other interests take over and the drug use declines. For a small number of young people drug use becomes problematic. Usually this is because drugs change the way people feel, both emotionally and physically and this can seem like a good way of coping.

Is alcohol as big a problem as the media says?

For some young people, yes! Like drug use, alcohol use can escalate. Hospitals are seeing younger patients with liver damage due to the high level of units being consumed. The drinking of spirits, low prices, marketing and greater accessibility have all contributed!

Young people need consistent messages about what is safe and appropriate.

Some people think Cannabis is harmless, what are the risks?

Like smoking tobacco there are increased risks of lung and throat cancer and other respiratory diseases. Cannabis use can cause memory loss, loss of motivation and psychological problems such as depression, paranoia and psychosis. Some individuals are more likely to develop mental health problems but these only become known after prolonged use. Although Cannabis is not physically addictive users can become dependent on using it or other substances to relax or change the way that they feel.

What will happen if I try and get help for my child?

In South Gloucestershire we have a small team of drug workers based within the Department for Children and Young People who can offer a confidential service to support you and your child. You can call our helpline for a chat or arrange for your child to have 1:1 sessions. These sessions will provide your child with an opportunity to talk about their difficulties and to start to make changes.

What do drugs look like?

Drugs come in the form of powders, pills, liquids and plants. They can be snorted, swallowed, injected or smoked. Those that are derived from plants are no less harmful than those chemically manufactured. There is no way of knowing purity or strength and no list of ingredients!

Young People's Drug & Alcohol Service

Helpline: 01454 868763
(Mon-Fri 9am-5pm)

Email:
ypservice@southglos.gov.uk



Reasons for trying drugs	% young people
I wanted to get high or change the way I was feeling	12%
Because my friends were doing it	12%
Because it's cool	4%
It was a dare	2%
I had nothing else to do	7%
Curiosity	25%
I wanted to forget my problems	6%
Because I was offered it	17%
I don't know/remember	14%

2006 survey of 999 11-18 yr olds in South Gloucestershire



Asking for help.....

Asking for help for drug or alcohol use can be difficult for any young person or their parent/carer. Although drug use is illegal, talking about it and getting support is not. Young people can talk to a teacher, a learning mentor, Connexions Personal adviser or School Health Nurse if they have worries. Alternatively young people or parents/carers can call our helpline and talk to a drug worker in confidence.

So why is it important to get help as soon as possible?

Many of the young people that we see who are experiencing difficulties with drugs or alcohol make lots of progress not only through changing their reliance on substances but in talking about many of the issues that are troubling them. Making positive changes, regaining motivation to achieve goals, exploring family/

relationship worries and gaining a boost in self esteem all help young people to move forward and become better equipped to face life's challenges. Adult drug users often report that they started using substances as a teenager but that they did not seek help until life felt completely unmanageable and a lot of damage had been done. Young people from all sorts of backgrounds find themselves struggling with drugs and alcohol and need a little support to get back on track!

Top tips for talking with your child!

All young people within South Gloucestershire learn about the risks and effects of drugs and alcohol within Personal, Social & Health Education lessons. It's a good idea to talk to your child about what they have been learning and to explore with them their views and perceptions. There is a

lot of coverage within the media and again try to talk to your child and let them know that you are interested in issues that affect young people. If at some point you do then feel that your child may be using a substance it may be easier to talk about it.

Unfortunately there is no set of signs to tell you if your child is using drugs or alcohol! But, if you notice a change in behaviour, health problems, a consistent change in mood or an increase in the need for money it's worth exploring what's going on. Don't jump to conclusions! Try and talk to your child about what you have noticed and be open to listen to their concerns. If drug use is mentioned you may well feel angry, worried or disappointed. Try to keep calm, keep talking to your child but most importantly keep listening! Our helpline is there to offer support to you and advise you on how you can talk to and support your child.

What may stop you seeking help for a drug or alcohol problem?	% of young people
I'm worried that my family/ friends/school will find out	24%
It's up to me to sort it out	21%
I feel embarrassed to talk to anyone	21%
I'm not sure whether I have a problem or not	22%
I don't think anyone can help me	12%

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www.talktofrank.com
0800 77 66 00



Wrapped up in drugs? Let us help you out!
Helpline: 01454 868763
ypservice@southglos.gov.uk

No Worries!

Sexual health services for young people
www.youthunltd.com
yphealth@southglos.gov.uk