



DRUGS & LEGAL HIGHS – PARENT INFORMATION

Why young people might try drugs?

It is common for young people to try smoking, drinking alcohol and drugs; it's part of 'pushing boundaries' and 'risk taking behaviour' associated with growing up and does not mean every child who tries drugs will become addicted or involved in crime. However, it is important that parents do not ignore the risks, or excuse it as their child 'just having fun or experimenting'.

Young people try or use drugs for various reasons including fun, curiosity, peer pressure or to cope with difficult situations, worry and/or low mood; the likelihood of this is increased if their friends or family do.

What is the law?

All illegal drugs are graded according to the risk they pose and are classified as either class A, B or C drugs. It is a criminal offence to possess, supply to others or manufacture any banned substances.

Psychoactive substances, commonly termed 'Legal Highs' are synthetic forms of illegal drugs, manufactured to make the user feel the effects of the real drug and which are highly dangerous. Changes to the law in 2016 made it illegal to supply any 'Legal High' for human consumption; this includes selling, or even giving, psychoactive substances to friends or anyone else for free.

How the police deal with a drug offence depends on the class of the drug and the offence committed; all drug related incidents will be recorded by the police. If your child is under 18 years old commits his/her first offence, they may receive a warning or a caution. If they go on to commit further offences, including selling drugs they may be dealt with by a Youth Court where they can receive a criminal record which can impact their future employment and travel to certain countries. It is important they know this to encourage them to make, informed, positive choices.

As a parent you risk breaking the law by turning a blind eye. If you know that your child is using or sharing illegal drugs in your home and you do nothing to stop it, you may be committing an offence. If you take drugs from your child, you must either destroy them or hand them into the police as soon as possible. By having the drugs in your possession you may be committing an offence, even if you have no intention of using them.

How will I know my child is involved with drugs?

There is 'no one sign' to indicate a child may be using or experimenting with drugs, there are a number of common signs that parents can be aware of that may indicate drug use, especially changes which are out of character.

- Appearance and lack of care about personal grooming
- Openness with you; being secretive and dismissive
- Mood swings; irritable and grumpy change to happy and bright
- Withdrawal from family members
- Loss of interest in hobbies, sports and other favourite activities
- Changed sleeping pattern; up at night and sleeping during the day
- Changed eating habits; eat more or less at random times
- Red or glassy eyes, sniffing or runny nose
- Less or more, money and possessions

These changes can be simply related to growing up, not just displayed by young people using drugs.

Prevention

- Be open – talk with your child about drugs as part of their growing up so they can be reassured about coming to you if they are ever affected
- Encourage them to be aware and responsible to pressures associated with drug use to promote a positive and safe attitude
- Educate yourself so you are aware of drug trends, signs and laws
- Know where your child is, who they are with and what they are doing.

Response

- Reassure them, listen to them: how they feel, what's going on in their life and be guided by how they want to tackle it and what is best for them
- Find out more about the effects of drugs your child is using to help you support them through the process of tackling their use
- Ensure they are aware of the choices to address their problem and that they have an understanding of the law.

What if I need help?

Often as parents you may be unable to resolve the situation for your child and you will need help from experts & professionals. This is perfectly understandable and often what is required to help your child. Contact drugs services, counselling services, and self-help groups who offer support for you, your child and the family. Try and seek help and support from other parents, friends or teachers too.

Support Services

North Yorkshire Police 101 for non-emergency assistance or if your child is in danger 999

North Yorkshire Horizons	01723 330 730
Crimestoppers	0800 555 111
NSPCC 24 Hour Child Protection Line	0808 800 500
Talk to Frank	0300 123 6600

