



# One Minute Guide



## What is Illicit Drug use?

Illicit drug use in children and young people can cause harm to health, relationships and wellbeing. Drug use is different from addiction, which is a chronic disease that makes it hard to quit.

## Purpose of the document

This guide has been written for professionals to help identify and support children and young people who may be using drugs illegally.

## Signs of an issue

When a young person first starts using drugs, they may think they can control this, but over time, they may need more drugs to get the same feeling or effect. For some young people, this can lead beyond use and to addiction. Signs of a problem with drugs use may include:

- Lack interest in things they used to love.
- Changes in friendship groups.
- Stop taking care of themselves.
- Spend more time alone than they used to.
- Eat more or less than normal.
- Sleep disturbance or sleeping more.
- Have problems at school, work or with family.
- Switch quickly from feeling positive to negative.
- Crave or strongly desire to use the substance.

These signs can also be typical behaviours of young people; therefore, it is important to talk openly and support the young person.

## Commonly used illegal drugs

**Cannabis** - A plant-based drug, that can be smoked, eaten or vaped. Some people can experience happiness, talkative and giggly, whilst others can experience paranoia, lethargy, confusion and anxiety. Driving whilst high on this drug is just as dangerous as drunk driving.

**Cocaine** - A white powder stimulant that is normally snorted or rubbed into the gums. The drug speeds up your whole body, making your heartbeat faster and raising your body temperature. When you use cocaine, you may talk, move, or think very fast. You may feel happy and full of energy, but your mood may then shift to anger. It can lead to feelings of paranoia and cause you to do things that don't make sense.

**Ketamine** – A dissociative anaesthetic drug which can make you feel numb and lead to feelings of dissociation and detachment. Ketamine can result in hallucinations, a floaty feeling (like your mind and body are detached from one another), poor coordination and trouble speaking. It can cause severe damage to the bladder, which is sometimes irreversible, and users may become incontinent.

**Nitrous Oxide (NOS)** – A colourless gas sold in canisters, usually inhaled using a balloon. It slows down your brain and your body's responses. Taking NOS can cause feelings of euphoria, fits of giggles and laughter and sound distortions and hallucinations. Regular use of Nitrous Oxide can lead to deficiency of vitamin B12.

**Ecstasy/MDMA** - This is a recreational/party drug taken as ecstasy pills or as MDMA powder. Most users report feelings of happiness and often feel love and affection for the people they're with and strangers around them. Physical side effects can include dilated pupils, tingling sensations, tightening, or moving of the jaw (gurning), raised body temperature, a faster heartbeat and nausea.

**Spice** (Synthetic Cannabinoids) - Since Spice acts like cannabis, the effects are similar. Some users will feel happy and relaxed, may get the giggles, feel hunger pangs and very talkative. Others feel ill or paranoid.

## Prescription and Over the Counter (OTC) drugs

These can be just as dangerous and addictive as using illegal drugs. A person can be misusing OTC drugs if they:

- Take medicine prescribed for someone else.
- Take extra doses or use a drug other than the way it's supposed to be taken.
- Take the drug for a non-medical reason.

Types of prescription drugs that are most often abused include:

- Opioid pain relievers
- Stimulant medications used to treat attention deficit hyperactivity disorder.
- Anxiety and sleep medicines

The most commonly used OTC drugs are cough and cold medicine that have dextromethorphan, which in high doses can make a person feel drunk or intoxicated. Please note: All prescribed and over-the-counter drugs should be stored safely out of the reach of children.



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## Local Wakefield Data

- In the Wakefield district, in 2022/23 the number of children and young people accessing the drug and alcohol treatment service was 65. Of these young people 40 were male and 25 were female.
- Of those accessing the service, Cannabis remains the most common substance used.
- 92% of young people in treatment reported that they used cannabis, 23% reported Alcohol use, 8% reported Ecstasy use, 15% reported Cocaine use and 8% reported Ketamine use.

## Who to contact for help and support in the Wakefield District

**If you are concerned about a child or young person involving drug use, you can contact the services below for help, advice, and support.**

- **Turning Point Inspiring Futures** – A non-judgmental, tailored support and advice service for young people under 25, who feel they need help with their drug and/or alcohol use [Inspiring Futures](#)
- **Turning Point Inspiring Families** – A specialist support service for family and carers who are directly affected by a person's drug and/or alcohol use. This can be individual support or part of a 5-step program. [Inspiring Families](#)
- **Turning Point Inspiring Recovery** – An information and advice service for over 25's that also delivers treatment and recovery support, whilst promoting health and wellbeing for those wanting help with their drug and/or alcohol use. [Inspiring Recovery](#)
- **WF-I-Can** - an online, information advice service for all children and young people across the Wakefield District including advice about drugs and alcohol help and support. <https://wf-i-can.co.uk/>

**If you have a safeguarding concern but there is no immediate danger, please call 0345 8503503 in the first instance to speak to the Integrated Front Door team.**

**In an emergency, you can call the Police on 999.**

## National Drug Support Services

There are also national organisations that can support individuals or families who need help, advice, or support in relation to drug use. Here is a list of some useful websites to signpost for help.

- **Frank** - [www.talktofrank.com/](http://www.talktofrank.com/)
- **Adfam** - [Home - Adfam](#)
- **Mind** – [Drug and alcohol addiction - useful contacts - Mind](#)

## Education Guidelines

### RSHE (Relationship, Sex and Health Education) guidelines.

Statutory guidance on RSHE can be found here, this includes support to lesson plans, policies and information and guidance.

- <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/relationships-education-relationships-and-sex-education-rse-and-health-education>
- <https://pshe-association.org.uk/drugeducation>

### West Yorkshire Police Education Programme (Pol-ed).

Wakefield schools can register on Pol-Ed to gain access to free lesson plans which can be adapted to meet the needs of pupils.

- <https://www.pol-ed.co.uk/>

**Risk and Resilience Framework** – All professionals working with children, young people and families are encouraged to access the framework, the framework provides practitioners with evidenced based tools to support both individuals and group/whole school approach.

- <https://www.riskandresilience.org.uk/>