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## **Newsletter – Havering YP Drug & Alcohol Service**

### **November 2020- Issue**

As we come out of the second lockdown and head towards the festive period we have put together a guide for parents and carers who may have worries about how to talk to a young person about substances. Please feel free to distribute to parents and carers or alternatively we can provide as a separate document, together with an information and guidance sheet on a range of illicit substances including cannabis, MDMA, Ketamine, Nitrous Oxide (NOS). Contact us for more information and to receive the information sheets.

### **Advice for Parents**

Drug and alcohol use can be a worrying subject for parents and carers. Here is some advice on what you can do for yourself and your child in dealing with these issues.

#### Young people who aren't using substances

One of the best things you can do is to start a dialogue with your child as soon as you can, and preferably before they find themselves in a situation where they might be offered drugs or alcohol. There is lots of information on the internet – search for something that is appropriate for the age of your child.

Together you may be able to explore the situations a child might find themselves in when being offered alcohol, cigarettes or other substances. Explore the notion of being able to say no if they don't want to try. Also be mindful of the fact that they may be curious and want to try things – experimentation with substances can be a 'normal' part of growing up – most young people who do this, do not go on to experience problems, but often 'grow out' of the behaviour (it is important to consider age again here – the younger the child, the greater the possible risks).

Consider your own behaviour regarding drinking alcohol and smoking (and use of other substances). The messages young people get from home can be very influential on their own life choices, for example, if you wind down at the end of the day with a glass of wine or light a cigarette in times of stress. There are some good support options to help you consider different ways of coping.

Don't forget that many legal substances can pose as much risk as illegal ones. Tobacco and alcohol should be considered as drugs. Trying to differentiate between substances as less or more harmful can be tricky as there are many variables which contribute to potential risk.

Are you aware of the risks associated with alcohol, tobacco or other drugs? Arm yourself with the facts – there are many resources available to help with this.

Be aware that the media are full of scare stories about drugs and young people - many of which simply aren't true. Avoid inaccurate and biased reporting and use reputable, researched sources of support and information

If you are concerned about your child using substances or your child discloses the use of drugs or alcohol...

Firstly, you should consider the points above

Try not to panic! It is okay to express your concern, but try to talk to your child calmly, exploring what is going on for them. Anger, shouting and accusations are likely to push your child away, and potentially make them more vulnerable.

There will be many factors that influence whether your child continues to use a substance. Just because they have tried it, does not mean they will automatically end up with a drug problem. Around half of 11-16 year olds will try a substance just once, and most will not try it again. Some may go on to use more regularly. A very tiny proportion will end up with a problem with that substance.

Explore how they feel about this use – are they happy with what they are doing and do they have all the facts needed to make an informed choice – do they need some support/advice/information to help them make these choices.

If you know your child is using drugs or alcohol it can be useful to set some mutual boundaries. Consider getting support for yourself as well as your child – it can be difficult to untangle emotion and fear from a situation involving your own family.

### A note on signs and symptoms

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It is very common for parents to want to be able to spot the 'signs and symptoms' of drug use and there are various theories as to what to look for. However, on looking at most of these, a large proportion could be attributed to many other things, not least 'normal' teenage behaviour (e.g. mood swings, tiredness, secretiveness).

If you notice changes in your child's behaviour, it may be worth pointing these out to them – 'I've noticed you don't seem yourself' or 'you've been spending a lot of time with x recently' – and follow it up with 'I'm here if you want to talk' – it may be that they are being affected by something completely unrelated to drugs and alcohol.

Most importantly, don't forget that you do not have to work this out on your own – there are many support options available for you and for your family.

### How to contact us

If you would like to refer a young person or child to our service, or if you would like to talk to somebody about any issues or worries you can contact us in the following ways:

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Email: [wizeuphavering@cgl.org.uk](mailto:wizeuphavering@cgl.org.uk), you can also speak directly to a member of our team on 07884 996917 / 07909 097621 / 07730 529052

For any queries or to discuss any concerns about a young person under 18 please contact us at Wize UP Havering <https://www.changegrowlive.org/wize-up-havering/info>

We are now seeing more young people face to face where it is safe to do so but also offering contacts through Skype and Zoom. For more info and other changes during Covid, please check out our COVID page (Under 21s) <https://changeGrowLive.org/coronavirus/u21>

Don't forget our new Webchat service is now live!!! For confidential support and advice our new webchat service is now open Monday – Fridays 1pm – 4pm. <https://www.changeGrowLive.org/wize-up-havering/info>

**Training:** We provide Substance misuse training for professionals. This includes how to use our screening tool to help identify a support need for YP. This training will be virtual until we can facilitate this face to face. Training will be monthly. Please speak to Sam to arrange training for your team or find out next dates.

Social media links:

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/wizeup.havering.5>

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/HaveringUp>

Insta: [https://www.instagram.com/wize\\_up\\_havering/](https://www.instagram.com/wize_up_havering/)

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