



INFORMATION FOR PARENTS AND CARERS ABOUT CANNABIS, XANAX AND ALCOHOL

Are you concerned about a young person who is using drugs?

Would you know the signs, risks and how to help?

For young people the main substances used within the Borough are cannabis, alcohol and tobacco. You may have heard about 'Legal Highs' and Xanax recently in the news. Legal Highs are no longer legal and are now termed New Psychoactive Substances (NPS), these, along with Xanax, have seen a big increase nationally. This is also a concern locally. For more information on NPS and Xanax visit www.talktofrank.com and search for NPS and Xanax. For the purpose of this communication we are focusing mainly on cannabis.

Cannabis

The effects of cannabis can vary. Some young people say using cannabis can them feel chilled out and happy in their own thoughts, while others say it makes them giggly and chatty. But it can also make people feel lethargic, unmotivated and some people become paranoid, confused and anxious. Cannabis can be smoked, eaten and vaped and is often referred to as Hash, Grass, Weed, and Skunk.

Cannabis can be harmful

There are many myths about cannabis, some that it is safe because it is natural and others that it will ruin your life. The truth is that it is illegal and can have some very harmful effects. The substance that young people are exposed to today is much stronger than it used to be. For this reason, those who use cannabis nowadays are at a higher risk of mental health problems and addiction. Cannabis is engineered to have high tetrahydrocannabinol (THC); the chemical that can lead to hallucinations and altered senses. Some cannabis is found to be up 80 times more potent than the cannabis that was available 15 years ago. However, finding out that your child has experimented with cannabis **doesn't** mean you need to panic and immediately assume they will go on to lead a life of crime and addiction.

What are the signs? *(These are indicators to look out for, but they do not mean that your child is definitely using cannabis)*

- Bloodshot eyes
- Increased appetite and weight gain
- Lack of motivation
- Nervous or paranoid behaviour
- Impaired coordination - slowed reaction time
- A distinct change in behaviour

What are the risks?

- Impact on school attendance, achievement and short-term memory loss
- Hallucination, psychotic episodes (when someone is unable to tell the difference between reality and their imagination), detrimental effects on mental health, mood changes and behavioural issues
- Funding the habit can lead to antisocial behaviour, crime, even gang activity
- Young people are at a higher risk of being encouraged to take other illegal drugs
- There could be legal implications in later life when applying to travel abroad or undergoing employment references and criminal record checks

What can you do to help?

- Do your homework about drugs - Make sure you know enough about drugs to talk to your child in an informed Visit www.talktofrank.com for facts, support and advice on drugs and alcohol
- Don't be complacent and believe that your child would never experiment with drugs
- Don't try to talk to your child about drugs before they rush off to school, for example. Or, if they are using drugs, don't confront them when they are high
- Listen to what they have to say and let them know you're always there for them
- Divert them to positive activities and encourage the right friends where possible
- Try not to challenge them with threats and regular discipline – they could shut down
- Although we all want our children to do well at school try to remember the pressure they are under to perform and achieve – help them find ways to relax and unwind
- Ask for help from professionals – you can speak with your GP, School, or the local drug and alcohol service SMART (details on page 3) if you have concerns or would like support and advice

About Xanax



Xanax is used to treat anxiety and panic disorders. Xanax users describe feeling relaxed and tired and can fall asleep or pass out for many hours. People who are addicted to Xanax can experience nasty withdrawal symptoms, which can include decreased concentration, nausea, headaches, anxiety, panic attacks and depression. Very uncomfortable bodily sensations can also develop; and fits can occur, which in severe cases can be fatal. There has been a sharp rise in 'fake' Xanax recently - you cannot normally be sure of the purity unless you are certain that the drug you have is a genuine pharmacy medicine.

Combining Xanax and alcohol

- Mixing Xanax with alcohol can increase anxiety and intensify panic attacks (as can antihistamines)
- In more severe situations the combination of Xanax and alcohol increases the sedative qualities to a level that is not only undesirable, but also life threatening
- When combined they can lower the heart rate to a dangerous level, breathing functions can be seriously impaired and if immediate medical treatment is not sought can result in death
- Possible side effects include depression, irritability, blurred vision, memory impairment, confusion, anxiety, light headedness, insomnia, nervousness, fear and incontinence
- Long term abuse and addiction to Xanax is associated with depression, psychotic experiences and aggressive impulsive behaviours

What to do if you are worried

'Don't panic' – advice, help and support is available (more info on the next page)

- **SMART Wokingham** offer support to children and young people who are using drugs and alcohol or are affected by parental drug and alcohol use. SMART also offer support and advice to families and carers. There is no need for a professional referral to the service. Contact info on next page.
- **DrugFAM** provide advice and support to families and loved ones affected by someone else's drug or alcohol use. Contact info on next page.
- **The NHS** offer very helpful guidance. Visit www.nhs.uk/live-well/healthy-body/talking-about-drugs-with-your-child
- **Drugabuse.com** provide useful tips for parents and carers. Visit www.drugabuse.com/guide-for-families/parents-of-addicted-children

Support for young people, families and carers



Free support for young people using drugs or alcohol.

Free help for young people who are affected by parental drug or alcohol use.

Free support for families and carers.

SMART WOKINGHAM

38 Station Road,
Wokingham, Berkshire, RG40 2AE

Telephone: 0118 977 2022

Mobile: 077649 60465

www.smartcjs.org.uk/contact-us/wokingham

Online chat service available during school holidays: www.smartcjs.org.uk/chat-online



Free advice and support to families and loved ones affected by someone else's drug or alcohol use.

DRUGFAM

Telephone: 0300 888 3853

Email: office@drugfam.co.uk
www.drugfam.co.uk



Free, honest and confidential advice about drugs.

FRANK

Telephone: 0300 123 6600

Text: 82111

Online chat service: 2pm -7pm
www.talktofrank.com/contact-frank