



Preparing young people for adult and working life

# Drugs Policy





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# My Voice London Drug Policy

My Voice London have drawn up a drugs policy for all mentors to abide by when dealing with drug related issues with their mentees.

When discussing illegal drugs, we must be clear in what we are going to say and how we are going to say it. We must have a good basic knowledge of the most popular drugs, so when we speak to the mentees we tell them facts and not opinions.

If a mentee asks you about illegal substances it is because he/she trusts you enough and values your opinion. It is not a subject they can easily discuss with their parents and they may not completely trust what their friends have told them. What you then say could have a huge influence on them and might well determine whether they start taking or continue to use illegal drugs.

The purpose of the policy is to provide guidance to mentors when dealing with drug related issues. The policy will insure continuity between mentors, so if a mentee is handed over then he/she will not be told contrasting information regarding the use of illegal drugs.

The guidelines will cover the following areas:

- \* Police procedures and possible punishments
- \* Rules to abide by when dealing with drug issues with the mentee
- \* Information on the most commonly used illegal drugs
- \* Drug helpline numbers and websites



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## Rules to abide by:

**\* When speaking about any illegal substance with a mentee we must never condone its use, for whatever reason.**

The mentee will very often take the mentor's word as gospel. If the mentor condones the use of any illegal drugs for any reason the mentee could interpret that in many different ways, which could lead to any number of problems for the mentee and the mentor.

**\* When speaking about the effects of drugs do not state your opinion, state facts.**

Make sure you know your facts when speaking to the mentee regarding drugs issues. The mentee may know more than you about drugs and will lose respect for you if you give them false information.

**\* My Voice London fully expects their mentors to be non-drug users and will never, under any circumstance, enter a mentoring session under the influence of any illegal drugs or alcohol.**

My Voice London expects their mentors to set the right example for their mentees and failure to comply with this could result in the mentor being reported to the police.

**\* Never underestimate mentees awareness to substance abuse.**

A mentee could be around drugs takers more often than not and is very likely to know all the signs of a user. If a mentor were to enter a session while under the influence of either any illegal drugs or alcohol there is a strong possibility the mentee could recognise this and could associate these signs with some form of abuse

**\* Enforce the fact that dealing with drugs is an illegal offence and there could be heavy consequences.**

Ensure mentees are fully aware of the consequences when dealing with illegal drugs - prison sentences, health issues etc.

**\* Never agree to help a mentee with supplies of illegal substances for their parents or carers.**

A mentee may think it's alright to ask you for drugs if it is not for their own use. Always refuse to supply no matter what or who it is for.

**\* Make mentees aware of the pitfalls of drugs taking ie: addiction, high cost, could lead to more harmful drugs etc.**

Showing them the extreme effects of constant use may deter them from using drugs for life.

# Police procedures and possible punishments

## **The Final Warning Scheme**

**This scheme is part of the Metropolitan Police Service Youth Justice policy and means that a caution can only be given at a police station by a police inspector or high ranking officer. It sets out a three stage process for dealing with young offenders.**

## **REPRIMAND**

This is intended for first time offenders, unless the offence is too serious where he/she may go straight to a **Warning** or **Prosecution** (see below). A Reprimand will be recorded and lasts for five years or until the offender's eighteenth birthday, whichever is the longer. It can be cited in court after a young person has been prosecuted and found guilty of another offence. It will be taken into account if a young person comes to the notice of the police again. The offender will be referred to the Youth Offending Team.

## **WARNING**

A warning is intended for second time offenders, unless the offence is too serious. A warning will be recorded and cited in court as for a reprimand. The young person will be referred to the Youth Offending Team and probably be required to undertake diversionary activities.

## **PROSECUTION**

The offender will be charged/summonsed with the offence, to appear in court. Papers will be submitted to the Crown Prosecution Service who will examine evidence and decide whether to proceed and present the case in court.

## **Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 – Maximum Penalties**

- \* Class A: Possession - 7 years imprisonment, a fine or both
- \* Class A: Supply - Life imprisonment, a fine or both
  
- \* Class B: Possession – 5 years imprisonment, a fine or both
- \* Class B: Supply – 14 years imprisonment, a fine or both
  
- \* Class C: Possession – 2 years imprisonment, a fine or both
- \* Class C: Supply – 14 years imprisonment, a fine or both

Passing drugs among friends is supplying. Allowing your house or your premises to be used for drug misuse is also illegal.

A conviction for any Misuse of Drugs Act offence can affect future employment and many countries may refuse visas to people with drug convictions.

# Ecstasy - Class A

E's, Doves, XTC, Adam, X, Beans

Background: Ecstasy was first patented in Germany in 1912 as a potential appetite suppressant though it wasn't until 1970 that ecstasy was introduced to those with an interest in drug-assisted psychotherapy. It gained wider popularity and was eventually banned in America in 1985 by the D.E.A. and has been controlled in Britain since 1977 under the Misuse of Drugs Act. Ecstasy is notoriously unreliable in content and has been known to contain caffeine, ephedrine, amphetamines, heroin and cocaine.

Effects: once you have 'popped an E' you will find you have a great love for all things around you. Also you will have a great surge of energy and increased self-confidence. Misuse of the drug will lead to great confusion, disorientation, anxiety, panic attacks, depression, insomnia, perceptual disorders and hallucinations, paranoia and psychosis.

# Cocaine – Class A

Snow, Rocks, Crack, Coke, Charlie, Blow, Toot, C, Happy dust, Uptown, The lady

Background: As early as 3000 B.C, there is evidence of coca use in South America. The inhabitants believed that the coca plant was a gift from God! In 1886 Coca-Cola was introduced, containing cocaine and caffeine. Around the same time Parke, Davis began to manufacture cocaine. At around the turn of the century, sniffing cocaine powder became popular. In 1914 cocaine was banned in the Americas.

Effects: Cocaine increases alertness, wakefulness, elevates the mood, decreases fatigue, increases energy, increased irritability, insomnia, restlessness. In large doses users often display symptoms of psychosis with confused and disorganised behaviour, irritability, fear, paranoia, hallucinations, and aggressiveness. It will also increase heart rate, blood pressure, body temperature while decreasing sleep, appetite and will provide a high risk of seizures, strokes, heart attacks and death.

# Heroin – Class A

Smack, Skag, H, Brown, Junk

Background: Heroin was not developed until 1874 and was originally marketed as a safe, non-addictive substitute for morphine. However, it was soon found to produce a severe dependency very quickly. Heroin and opiates were made illegal in 1925 with the Harrison narcotic act, which controlled the sale of opium derivatives, and cocaine.

Effects: Heroin is generally a sedative that induces a euphoric, drowsy, warm and content feeling. They also relieve stress and discomfort by creating a detachment from pain. With higher doses, sedation can be extreme and can cause unconsciousness, coma and often death from heart failure. The risk of overdose increases greatly if heroin is used with any other form of drug.

# Crack – Class A

Base, Rock, White cloud, Cloud nine, Free base, Baseball

Home 'freebasing' became popular in the 1970's. However, after a number of highly publicised incidents – including one where comedian Richard Prior set himself on fire with the ether and nearly died – the danger of working with ether in an already intoxicated state became well known. In mid 1980's it became known that sodium-bicarbonate or ammonia could be substituted for ether for the same result with much less hazard. Around this time, drugs gangs began to market the new product vigorously.

Effects: Crack has the same effects as other types of cocaine but far more intense. However, the effects are far more short lived and once the drug leaves the brain, the user experiences deep depression, irritability and fatigue with an increased risk of abnormal heart rhythms, high blood pressure and death. Typical signs of a drug user are the coughing up of black phlegm, lung trauma and bleeding, hoarseness, parched lips, tongue and throat from inhaling hot fumes, mental deterioration, psychosis, suicidal thoughts with social withdrawal and violent behaviour.



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# Amphetamine – Class B

Speed, Whizz, Sweets, Uppers, Paste, Billy

**Background:** Amphetamine is a synthetic stimulant and has been available since the 1930's. In the 1950's and 60's it was commonly prescribed by doctors for depression and as an appetite suppressant. It comes as a white, greyish white, pale pink or yellow powder and is often contained in a 'wrap', which is a foiled piece of paper that looks like a small envelope. Illicit tablets containing amphetamine are available, but are much less common than the powder form of the drug.

**Effects:** Causes feelings of extra energy, confidence and alertness with resultant faster heartbeat. Initial feelings can last up to eight hours but 'coming down' can make the user feel tired, anxious, panicky and depressed. Dependence can occur when users need to take more and more to experience that initial buzz. Anyone prescribed anti-depressants should never contemplate taking speed as the combination of drugs can kill.

# CANNABIS – CLASS C

Marijuana, Grass, Dope, Pot, Weed, Skunk, Blow, Ganja, Hash, Wacky Backy, Mary Jane, Blunt, Roach, Joint

**Background:** Cannabis is a very versatile plant. Hemp, a strong fibre produced from the stem, has been used to make rope, paper, and cloth. The dried leaves and flowers are used as marijuana for their psychoactive or medicinal properties. The roots of the plant have been used medicinally and the seeds are used for oil and animal feed.

**Effects:** Time colour and spatial perception distortions occur as well as a dreamy euphoria, excitement, laughter and an increased appetite known as the munchies. This is a very popular form of 'recreation' for school and college pupils. Cannabis is an increasingly popular drug with a wide range of takers.

# Alcohol

Background: Alcohol has been produced by humans for over 12,000 years. Alcohol has impacted societies since caveman times in one way or another. Some have worship rituals, some in social customs, some have had widespread social problems with alcohol and some have banned it altogether.

Effects: The effects of alcohol can range from mild intoxication where you will have the feeling of warmth, flushed skin, impaired vision and judgement while decreasing any inhibitions. Extreme intoxication could cause coma and death. The effect will vary according to body size, amount consumed and the time consumed in. Combining alcohol with any other drug will intensify the effects of the other drugs. Many accidental deaths have occurred when this happens. Serious long term effects of alcohol will appear many months or years later. Common problems of long term alcohol abuse range from heart and liver disease, loss of appetite, social problems, infections and menstrual irregularities.

# Solvents

Glue, Gas, Marker Pens, Aerosols

Background: These components are carbon based (organic) and produce similar effects to alcohol or anaesthetics when their vapours are inhaled. Gases, aerosols or glue can be inhaled through the mouths or nose so long as the substance is in a gas at normal temperatures or gives off a vapour. They are often inhaled from bags (especially crisp bags and freezer bags); some are taken by spraying directly into the mouth. Users may try to intensify the effect by placing a plastic bag over the head and inhaling inside the bag. Some products such as thinners are put on to a material and sniffed.

Effects: Sniffing solvents can affect the heart and can cause death. Extreme nausea leading to physical sickness can also prove accidentally fatal when the person can literally choke on his/her own vomit. There is also the risk of fire from highly inflammable solvents. Long term use can damage liver, lungs and kidneys.



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## USEFUL DRUG HELPLINES AND AGENCIES

### **NATIONAL DRUGS HELPLINE 0800 77 66 00**

Offers a free and confidential 24 hour service about drugs and can refer people to local drugs services.

### **ADFAM NATIONAL 020 7928 8900**

Provide a confidential support and information helpline for families and friends of drug users.

### **DRINKLINE 0345 32 02 02**

Gives confidential information and advice and can put you in touch with your local alcohol advice service.

### **QUITLINE 0800 00 22 00**

Helpline for smokers who want to give up.

### **COMMUNITY DRUG HELPLINE 0208 647 6169**

Provide information, advice and counselling, group work and alternative therapies for problem drug users and their families. They also run an advice line and support groups specifically for parents of drug users.

### **RELEASE 020 7603 8654**

Provides a 24 hour confidential helpline on drug use and legal issues

### **DRUGS IN SCHOOLS 0345 36 66 66**

Offers advice and information for those concerned about a drug incident in school.

### **South West London and St. Georges NHS Trust**

**Drug & Alcohol Team**

**Acre Road Clinic**

**Kingston**

**KT2 6EY**

**Tel: 020 8549 9279**

Drugs information and advice by phone or appointment only.



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# Sources used to draw up the My Voice London policy

## **London Borough of Merton**

Guidelines on Drug Education and Managing Drug Related Incidents in Schools.

## **Web Sites**

[www.drugabuse.com](http://www.drugabuse.com)

[www.trashed.co.uk](http://www.trashed.co.uk)

[www.globalgateway.com](http://www.globalgateway.com)