



FACT SHEET: Children and Young People who Abuse Substances

Some children and young people experiment with substances such as drugs and alcohol. Some may use them recreationally and some may go on to experience problematic use, which affects many aspects of their lives. The outcomes for this group of children and young people may be poor health, poor mental health, family breakdown and offending behaviour for example.

Vulnerable Groups

Research demonstrates that some groups of young people are more vulnerable to develop problems with misuse of substances:

- Young people involved in the criminal justice system
- Young people who are Looked After by the local authority
- Young people leaving local authority care
- Young people excluded from mainstream education or persistent truants
- Young homeless
- Children whose parents / siblings have drug and / or alcohol problems

It is important that children and young people receive good education, information and advice about substances and their effects.

Sheffield Substance Misuse Toolkit

This substance misuse screening Toolkit can be used to:

- Identify and respond to alcohol and drug use by a young person
- Obtain specialist help for a young person
- Access advice by contacting Young People's Drug and Alcohol Service - The Corner Tel: 0114 2752051

The Toolkit should be used when:

- A young person asks for advice or information about any substances
- A young person confirms misuse
- A substance related incident occurs
- Substance misuse is found in the same household
- When concerns are raised in the course of any assessment such as a CAF.

Safeguarding Issues

Safeguarding concerns arise when:

- The substance use is unusual in view of the age of the child
- The misuse is becoming chaotic and risky
- The misuse is leading to crime or exploitation by others, including sexual exploitation
- The misuse is a serious danger to health
- The child is caring for another child and using substances
- An adult is involved in facilitating the misuse
- The parents/carers are misusing substances

In cases where safeguarding children concerns are identified due to substance misuse, it is recommended that a referral to The Corner Tel no. 0114 2752051 is made in addition to the referral to Children's Social Care.

Action when there are concerns about a Child

If anyone is concerned that a child or young person is at risk of significant harm, for any other reason, or in connection with the misuse of any substances whether alcohol, drugs, gas, aerosol, glue, prescription medication a telephone referral should be made to Children's Social Care as soon as possible. All workers should follow this up in writing within 24 hours.

All out of hours contacts should be made to the Out Of Hours Service and the South Yorkshire Police Central Referral Unit can also be contacted for child abuse concerns.

For further details see chapter 3.3 in the Sheffield Safeguarding Children Board Child Protection Procedures.