



The Wessex Partnership

November 2015

Dear Parents and Carers

Keeping Your Child Safe From Illegal Drugs

Wiltshire Police, the Wessex Partnership of Secondary Schools in South Wiltshire and other partner agencies are working together to raise awareness of the harm that can be caused to young people by the use of illegal drugs. We are keen to encourage parents to play a part in reducing the risk posed to young people by being able to identify the signs of drug use and by also helping police to reduce the availability of drugs to young people.

Most young people don't use drugs. Most young people aged 11-15 say they have never taken drugs (79%), nevertheless an estimated 360,000 secondary school aged pupils in England took at least one drug last year. Only 5% of 15 year olds say they have taken a drug more than 10 times. Cannabis is the most widely used illegal drug, with 7.5% of secondary school pupils saying they took the drug in the last year, and 14% of 16 to 19 year olds. The figures for this area may well be lower than the national figures quoted above but recent arrests made by police and recent intelligence from a variety of sources indicate that South Wiltshire is not immune to the issue.

The purpose of this letter is as follows:

- to provide parents and carers with the warning signs to look out for;
- to provide details of where you can get help and advice;
- to let you know how you can help police deal with people who supply drugs to children.

Warning signs to look out for

Despite all of your efforts to keep your child safe from drugs, there may come a time that you begin to suspect that your child has a problem with substance abuse. You may hear your child talking to someone about drugs or perhaps you read some disturbing texts/emails or see some concerning material on Facebook. Since mood swings and unpredictable behaviour are frequent occurrences for pre-teens and teenagers, parents may find it difficult to spot signs of alcohol and drug abuse. But if your child starts to exhibit one or more unusual signs, drug abuse may be at the heart of the problem. Here are some warning signs to look out for:

- money missing from your purse or wallet;
- the use of incense, room deodoriser, or excessive perfumes/cologne to mask the smell of smoke;
- excessive use of mints or mouthwash to cover the smell of alcohol;
- use of eye drops to make eyes that are bloodshot or dilated appear unimpaired;
- medication (over the counter or prescription) goes missing;
- negative impact at school (grades have declined or homework has decreased and school attendance has decreased due to drug use);
- personality changes due to mood altering drugs;
- withdrawal and decreased interactions with established friends;
- new friends are made but your child does not bring them home or allow you to meet them;
- over the counter materials that can be used for getting high (such as computer cleanser, nail polish/nail polish remover, correcting fluid, hairsprays or other inhalants) are found in personal belongings;

- increased sleeping due to depressant drug use, or decreased sleep due to stimulants;
- weight loss or excessive eating due to the effects of drug use;
- drug paraphernalia (such as pipes, bags of seeds, rolling papers, empty bottles bags of pills etc) are found in personal belongings;
- secrecy regarding activities or interactions, and conversations that have coded language;
- your son or daughter is unusually reluctant to give you access to his or her bedroom.

Where you can get help and advice

If you are concerned that your child has been taking illegal drugs there are a number of places where you can obtain advice:

- your child's school will have a team of pastoral staff who can help;
- your family GP is a valuable source of help, particularly if you are aware of health issues;
- Motiv8 is a service provided in Wiltshire and will work with young people and their families. They can be contacted on 0800 169 6136 or email info@dhimotiv8.org.uk
- NHS information is available online:
<http://www.nhs.uk/livewell/mentalhealth/pages/talkingtoteens.aspx>

Help police deal with people who supply drugs to children

Wiltshire Police will not tolerate the supply of illegal drugs to children and will do what it can to bring offenders to justice. In order to identify those who are supplying drugs to children we need the help of the community. The police want to ensure drug dealers feel very uncomfortable offering drugs to children as they should know that police will be informed and they will be prosecuted.

If you or your child has any information that could help police reduce the supply of illegal drugs to children there are a number of ways in which information can be provided:

- talk to your child's school who will pass the relevant information on to the police. A member of the school's Pastoral Team or otherwise a senior member of staff will be glad to help;
- contact police by calling 101 and ask to speak with your Neighbourhood Policing Team.
- Contact Crimestoppers anonymously on 0800 555 111 or <https://crimestoppers-uk.org/>

Please remember that most young people do not use drugs. However, by being vigilant you can help us work together to ensure that Wiltshire remains one of the safest places in which to bring up children.

