



# ARC Counselling and Information Service Factsheet

## Drugs and substance use

Using substances changes the way people feel, think and behave. This means that our 'normal' behaviour is changed, as well as our ability to think about things and to feel a normal range of emotions.

There are a vast number of substances that have this effect, including illegal drugs such as marijuana, ecstasy and cocaine, but also legal substances such as nicotine, alcohol, caffeine, chocolate and other foods, especially sugary, fatty and salty foods, and some medications, such as sleeping tablets or energy pills.

Different substances also have a different impact on different people – for example, although alcohol generally had a 'depressive' effect (it causes a drop in mood after consumption, sometimes for as much as a few days, depending on how much is consumed), different immediate reactions can be seen where some people become more lively and extroverted, while others becomes sad and weepy. Reactions might depend on how the person felt beforehand, their personality or their circumstances – such as whether they are alone or in company.

Therefore, when thinking about issues around substance use, we need to bear in mind not only the substance, but also the circumstances and personality of the person involved and the context of the substance use.

There are many dimensions to substance use or misuse – health, social, criminal justice etc. – each with different levels of impact, depending on the substance. There are also differences in people's attitudes toward various substances and it can be very difficult, if not impossible, to identify an absolute 'truth' about any substance or a person's use of that substance.

If you are concerned about your use of a substance, whether it is legal or illegal, or you are struggling with someone else's substance use, counselling can help you to explore your options and support you in making a decision about how to move forward. Your counsellor will not make any judgements, but will help you to draw your own conclusions and to make your own decisions.

To arrange an appointment with one of our counsellors, regardless of your age or circumstances, please call 0118 977 6710. Alternatively, check out the links and further information provided below.

## Useful links

- **Talk to Frank** provides information and where to find help on drugs for young people.

<http://www.talktofrank.com/>

- The **Department of Health** pages are intended primarily as a resource for a wide range of professionals and managers to help in the delivery of drug prevention and treatment services. Some of the information will also be of interest to parents, young people and students.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-of-health>

- **DrugScope** is one of the UK's leading centres of expertise on drugs. Its aim is to inform policy development and reduce drug-related risk. The organisation provides quality drug information, promotes effective responses to drug taking, undertakes research at local, national and international levels, advises on policy-making, encourages informed debate and speaks for its member bodies working on the ground.

<http://www.drugscope.org.uk/>

- **AA (Alcoholics Anonymous)** provides a full list of local meetings and support in your area. The site can also provide information and can direct you to meetings for families and partners of those with alcohol problems. There are often also specialist local meetings, such as women's discussion groups.

<http://www.alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk/>