



Drugs: Guidance for the Youth Service

A Summary



DrugScope



Alcohol Concern
Making Sense of Alcohol

Drugs: Guidance for the youth service has been written for managers and providers of the wide variety of youth services, including small faith-based groups, large voluntary sector organisations and local authority-maintained services.

This Summary of the Guidance has been specially commissioned for youth workers. Whether you are employed or a volunteer, this Summary will give you a quick, straightforward overview of the content and key messages.

The Check Points! provide you with questions to ask yourself and/or your supervisors or managers. These can also be used as part of a training or professional development programme

You can access the full Guidance at www.drugscope.org.uk

The Guidance is divided into eight sections:

- **Section 1** explains why the Guidance is needed and introduces the UN definition of drugs:

A drug is a substance people take to change the way they feel, think or behave. (UN Office on Drugs and Crime).

- **Section 2** provides a background to drug policy and the youth service in England. There is a review of young people's drug use and an explanation of what makes some young people more likely to have problems with drugs than others. This section is intended to inform discussion within the youth service and with partners about the priorities for drug policy development.
- **Section 3** gives a strategic overview of the role of the youth service and partner agencies who contribute to reducing the harm from drugs.
- **Section 4** reviews what is understood about effective drug education and offers a starting point for decisions about how the youth service can provide appropriate drug education for young people.

- **Section 5** addresses issues of the management of drug-related incidents, which partners to involve and when.
- **Section 6** offers a model for drug policy development by the youth service and provides a framework for a drug policy.
- **Section 7** deals with the particular issues facing providers of outreach and detached youth work.
- **Section 8** describes new approaches to training in drugs issues for youth workers in the light of *Every Child Matters*.

Several sections in the document include case studies and “dilemma boxes” to provide starting points for discussion with managers, management committees and providers of youth services. They may also be useful as part of team-building and training activities.

The guidance also includes 13 **Appendices**. The appendices include examples of protocols and procedures which may be adapted for use in your own youth work setting.

CHECK POINT!

Your local authority may already have drug policies, drug education programmes and procedures for managing drug-related incidents to help you.

Do you know what these are?

See Section 1 for further information



What are the key messages of the Guidance?

Most young people don't use illegal drugs, but some young people are more vulnerable than others to the harms which drugs cause. Youth services are often in contact with young people who are more vulnerable than others to drug misuse. This, and the commitment of the youth service to the personal development of young people, provides a unique opportunity for youth workers to contribute to having an impact on the factors which can protect young people from problematic drug use. These include:

- Strong bonds with the local community
- A supportive relationship with at least one adult
- Clear boundaries for acceptable behaviour.

CHECK POINT!

How does your role contribute to the personal development of young people? How does the service you work for offer young people opportunities for strong bonds with their local communities and for supportive relationships with adults other than their parents/carers? How are young people involved in setting and maintaining boundaries for acceptable behaviour?

See Section 2 for further information



The youth service works in partnership with a wide range of other agencies and at various different levels to deliver a number of opportunities for young people with drug-related needs. These opportunities might include drug education, activities to divert young people from drug use, and referral and/or support for drug related problems. Information-sharing is key to enabling young people to access the services most able to meet their needs.

CHECK POINT!

How do local partnerships support you to meet the drug-related needs of young people with whom you have contact? Are you aware of the four-tiered approach to drug services? What is your organisation's policy on confidentiality? What procedures do you have for ensuring that information-sharing is appropriate and effective and, as far as possible, maintains confidentiality?

See Section 3 for further information

Drug education aims to provide young people with opportunities to develop knowledge, skills and attitudes about drugs and appreciate the benefits of a healthy lifestyle.

Drug education should always take account of the needs of the young people and be based on the best understanding of effective practice. Youth workers should seek to establish a safe and secure environment where young people can express their needs and learn about drug issues. The ground rules should always make clear the limits of confidentiality which can be offered to young people.

CHECK POINT!

How do you assess young people's needs for drug education? How do you ensure a safe and secure environment for discussion of drug issues while ensuring that everyone recognises the limits of confidentiality?

See Section 4 for further information

All youth services should have a *written* policy which describes the range of responses to drug related incidents. The immediate health and safety of young people and youth workers should be the first priority in the event of a drug-related incident. The youth service and the police should have a locally-agreed protocol which includes the disposal of suspected illegal drugs.

CHECK POINT!

When was your policy on drug-related incidents last updated?
What does it have to say about:

- recording drug-related incidents?
- disposal of suspected illegal drugs?
- naming young people when involving the police?
- referring young people to other agencies?
- managing medicines on residential visits?

See Section 5 for further information

Young people should be involved in the development of a drug policy, which should include drug education, drug incident management, information sharing and confidentiality.

CHECK POINT!

How do you ensure young people have a say in the development of drug policy? When were young people last consulted on this issue?

See Section 6 for further information





Outreach and detached youth work both have potential to engage with young people who may be at risk of problematic drug use. This form of youth work needs clear aims and objectives and workers need to know how their contribution will be evaluated. Ideally, detached youth workers should not work alone, and risk assessments should take into account the location and nature of the work being carried out.

CHECK POINT!

As a detached or outreach worker, how do you ensure that you have clear aims and objectives for your work with young people about drugs? How do you contribute to the assessment of risk in the locations where you work? What procedures are in place to ensure you can access assistance if you feel unsafe?

See Section 7 for further information

Youth workers should demonstrate the basic competencies expected of the wider children's workforce, including drug-related knowledge and awareness. Youth workers should also be able to demonstrate competencies in basic screening, and referral of young people with substance misuse problems.

CHECK POINT!

What training have you received with respect to drugs and young people? Are you able to carry out basic screening to identify whether a young person should be referred for a more detailed assessment of their drug-related needs?

See Section 8 for further information



Acknowledgements

A joint DrugScope and Alcohol Concern project funded by a grant from the Department for Education and Skills and the Department of Health

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