



Drug and alcohol support for young people



ST HELENS
BOROUGH COUNCIL

St Helens Young People's Drug and Alcohol Team (YPDAAT)

Newsletter July 2020

Who are we?

Welcome to our first newsletter for some time. There have been a number of changes in the team over recent times so if you don't know us all already, here's a chance to 'meet the team'.

Visit our [Meet The Team](#) page to see our profiles.

What do we do?

We're a small team but we do a lot. We're here to help young people and prevent them from causing harm to themselves or others due to substance misuse.

We will work with young people who are using any forms of substances including legal and illegal drugs such as cannabis, cocaine, ecstasy, ketamine, solvents (gas etc), who are drinking too much alcohol or maybe misusing other things like paracetamol, prescribed medication etc. We understand that teenage years can be difficult and many face a lot of problems associated with growing up or having a hard time at home or school, with friends and other relationships and the strains and stresses of life in general.

More young people than ever tell us that they don't use drugs or alcohol at all, but we know that some will start to experiment with different drugs or start drinking, and for others this can become more of a regular thing which then causes additional problems for them.

Young people's health and wellbeing is at the heart of all the work we do. We can help them to overcome a wide range of issues that may be leading them to use drugs or alcohol.

Where are we based?

Normally we would be based at Lord Street Centre, near to St Helens Town Centre, (off College Street). We would meet with young people at our base or see them in school or other community venues or visit them at home. Currently, because of coronavirus, we're mainly working from home but will come and meet with young people either in school, where it is appropriate or meet in a suitable outdoor space (when it's not raining!). We will discuss with the young person where they think would be a good place to meet – or if they are happy to speak with us on the phone or over facetime or even by text, we will be able to do this. **We'll try to be as flexible as possible.**

What young people have said about the service

Good support

Someone to listen to

They are nice and helpful

Supportive, helpful and not judgemental – helped me sort my head out

Read “Sam’s” story here: [Sam's story](#)

Supporting young people during Covid

During the lockdown period we delivered wellbeing packs to young people we are working with and these were well received. Young people (and parents) told us:

Thank you so much for the pack, the colouring has helped me out a lot when I've been getting stressed out

This is brilliant, I really wanted some cards, now me and my dad can do something together. I've been colouring as well, helps calm me down



Information for parents

Most young people we work with live in their family home and we have a lot of contact from parents who are worried about their child and not sure who to turn to or where to go for help and support. Part of our offer is that we will look at the whole family and try and put extra help in place, by completing an **Early Help Assessment** and a Family Action plan to prevent things from getting worse. The families we have worked with, who have had this in place, tell us that the help they have had has changed their lives. We will always speak to you about this first and make sure you are happy for us to do this.

What parents have said about the service

It's been great, I'm really impressed with how much help we've had

Parental support has been fantastic. YPDAAT interlinked with other services and have been so supportive – they always did what they said they would do

Didn't know what to do at the time and the support was brilliant and things are much better. I don't worry about my child now as much

The worker really helped us at a time when we didn't know what to do!

Information sessions for parents

We also offer short sessions for parents to help them understand the risks and harms of substance use, how to have those difficult conversations with their children and to look out for signs of possible drug or excessive alcohol use. These sessions have had excellent feedback and parents have said that they felt that they were so alone in worrying about this or felt they would be judged by others. They have found support in talking to other parents in similar situations.

The sessions are free to attend, however because of coronavirus, currently we are planning to start running them as virtual sessions using Microsoft Teams. If any parents are interested in attending future programmes, they can contact us at ypdaat@sthelens.gov.uk and ask for a place on the next session.

What can parents do to help?

St Helens has one of the highest rates in England for admissions to hospital by young people due to alcohol use, but there are plenty of ways that parents can help their children avoid the risks of drug or alcohol related harm.

Encourage a 'new normal' of alcohol use for young people

A campaign was launched at Christmas 2019 that encouraged parents to avoid giving young people alcohol. We hope to continue with this campaign later this year. Visit the [YPDAAT website](#) to see top tips for parents on how to create a 'new normal'.

Talk to their children about drugs and alcohol

Parents can also take the [ACE Pledge](#) which will help them to encourage their children not to drink, at least until they are 18 years old (research tells us that alcohol can have a harmful effect on teenagers' brain development which is why there are no safe limits of alcohol use for young people). An adult should drink no more than 14 units per week, visit the [Alcohol Change website](#) for more information.



Information for professionals

We also offer a wide range of support to other services to help them to support young people. We know that young people will often need education and help to try to navigate their way around teenage years. Visit the [YPDAAT website](#) for more information about who we work with and what we offer.

Training

We have a wide range of training sessions that we can deliver, as well as bespoke sessions by request. [Check out our training options on the website](#) and click on the **Eventbrite link**. Due to current restrictions, all of our training for the near future will be delivered via Microsoft Teams, bookings can be made via Eventbrite. All our training for the year is now available to book on after the team have spent some time getting skilled up to deliver sessions using remote facilities.

Consultation

Practitioners working with young people can contact us if they have any queries about a young person they may be worried about. They can email us at ypdaat@sthelens.gov.uk

Referrals

Any services can refer young people to the team for one-to-one support, but this must be with the young person's knowledge/consent. [Referral forms are available on our website](#). Users of ICS and EHAT can make referrals through these systems by using the 'Referral to YPDAAT' form in the 'Forms' section.

Offer to schools

We have an extensive offer to schools to support them in several ways. This includes contributing to secondary schools' health and wellbeing plans, staff training and development and support to manage drug incidents in schools. We also have a range of group sessions to deliver to young people, albeit these are currently on hold, but we will be reviewing these again from September 2020. All schools have a YPDAAT link worker who will be their main contact for accessing the service.

Local campaigns

N₂othing to laugh about

The team, alongside Safer Communities, have launched a campaign 'N₂othing to laugh about', which raises awareness of the dangers of nitrous oxide use. During the COVID-19 outbreak, there has been a perceived increase in the use of nitrous oxide (N₂O) in St Helens and across the UK – due to drug paraphernalia (canisters, balloons, plastic bags) being littered in parks, open spaces and alleyways.



This campaign aims to discourage the use of nitrous oxide, by raising awareness of the health impacts, environmental impacts, and the effect perceived increase in drugs use can have on local communities.

Nitrous oxide is commonly known as 'NOS' or 'laughing gas'. It's a colourless gas which when used as a drug is dispensed from a small silver metal canister into a container, such as a balloon or plastic bag and inhaled from the container for a short-lived high.

Supply of nitrous oxide for recreational drug use is illegal. This means anyone found to be selling, possessing to sell, or giving away nitrous oxide to be inhaled as a drug could face up to seven years in prison or an unlimited fine. It is legal to possess for personal use – but usage does come with risks.

View the Video here: [NOS video](#)

For more information, visit the [NOS page](#)

For any further information please do not hesitate to contact the team by emailing ypdaat@sthelens.gov.uk or call 01744 675605