Advice on drugs and alcohol

All drugs carry risks. In young people, who are not yet fully grown, the effects can be especially unpredictable and dangerous. In addition to this the consequences of being caught and charged with drug offences could be a criminal record or custodial sentence, which can impact negatively on future life choices.

What you should look for

- Loss of interest in sports or favourite activities;
- Lack of interest in appearance or personal hygiene;
- Dramatic mood swings, excessive tiredness, lethargy, changes in appetite;
- Sudden changes in established friendship groups;
- Taking time off school;
- Dilated pupils, red eyes, bad skin;
- Spending, stealing or borrowing money, coupled with a refusal to explain how/why.

What to do if you suspect your child is using drugs

Don't panic. Try to remain calm and listen. Offer support, make sure they are safe of any immediate danger and wait until later to talk things through. Get help and if it is a medical emergency call 999.

Useful contacts

To report a crime and other concerns that do not require an emergency response, call 101 or call 999 in an emergency.

Safer Neighbourhood Policing Team - contact your local Safer Neighbourhood Team by calling 101 or to find their details please visit www.police.uk and use the search tool.

Hertsmere Community Safety Partnership (CSP) - contact your local CSP by calling 020 8207 7801 or email partnership.support@hertsmere.gov.uk.

Crimestoppers - report any information about crime 100% anonymously by phone or online, call 0800 555 111 or visit www.crimestoppers-uk.org.

Fearless - non-judgemental information about crime and criminality dedicated to children and young people. Young people can report any information about crime 100% anonymously online, visit www.fearless.org.

CGL - drug and alcohol support service for adults and young people, call 01707 256532 or email herts@cgl.org.uk.

Childline - a free and confidential helpline and online service dedicated to children and young people. Available 24 hours a day, seven days per week, call 0800 1111 or visit www.childline.org.uk.

Family Lives - a free and confidential helpline to get advice on all aspects of parenting, open 9am to 9pm, Monday to Friday and 10am to 3pm Saturday and Sunday, call 0808 800 2222 or visit www.familylives.org.uk.

Hertfordshire Safeguarding Children Board - if you’re worried about a young person being abused or mistreated or if you are a young person being abused or mistreated, call 0300 123 4043 or visit www.hertfordshire.gov.uk.

Hertfordshire Wellbeing Service - for support with mental health and wellbeing call 0300 777 0707 or visit www.hwt.nhs.uk.

Herts Young Homeless - for support, education and mediation for vulnerable young people and families to prevent young people becoming homeless call 03333 202 384 or visit www.hyh.org.uk.

Missing People SafeCall - a free confidential helpline to speak to someone urgently if you’re worried about a missing child, or if you are a child who is missing or thinking of running away. Available 24 hours a day, seven days per week, call/text 116 000 or email 116000@missingpeople.org.uk.

Talk to Frank - free confidential drugs information and advice line call 0300 123 6600 or visit www.talktofrank.com.

The Living Room Hertfordshire - addiction therapy and support for individuals and families, call 0300 365 0304 or visit www.livingroomherts.co.uk.

YC Hertfordshire - provides projects, programmes, information, advice, guidance and support for young people aged 11-19, call 0300 123 7538, visit www.yc.hertfordshire.org, or email yc@hertfordshire.gov.uk.

Advice for parents and carers on gangs and drugs

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Advice for parents and carers on gangs and drugs

Don’t panic. Try to remain calm and listen. Offer support, make sure they are safe of any immediate danger and wait until later to talk things through. Get help and if it is a medical emergency call 999.
The vast majority of young people are not involved in gangs and want nothing to do with them. However, the behaviour of the small number of young people who are involved has a significant impact on communities, on their families and friends, as well as themselves.

**Advice on gangs**

- Talk to your child and listen;
- Encourage them to get involved in positive activities (and to think about their future employment);
- Get involved in your child’s school;
- Know your child’s friends and their families;
- Always know where your child is and who they are with;
- Help them to cope with pressure and how to deal with conflict without the use of violence;
- Speak to them about the serious consequences of violent or illegal behaviour. Help them to understand the dangers of being in a gang and find constructive alternative ways to use their time;
- Keep lines of communication open;
- Be aware of what your child is doing on the internet;
- Look for ways of disciplining your child that does not involve harshness, anger or violence;
- Contact local organisations that provide mentoring and other support for young people;
- Talk about your child’s behaviour with their school and other parents.

**Why do young people join gangs?**

Young people join gangs for many reasons including:

- Respect and status;
- To gain friends;
- A sense of belonging;
- Excitement;
- To find a substitute family;
- Power;
- Protection;
- Money;
- Peer pressure.

**What can you do?**

If your child is already involved in a gang, they may not want to talk about it or may be scared. It is important they know you want to listen and support them. Make sure they know they have a choice.

If your child is already involved

- Ask them what you can do to help. Try to agree what they should do next. Work with them to find solutions and choices;
- Seek help from local community organisations or youth services. They can offer specialist support services to help them;
- Committing crime and ending up with a criminal record will affect the rest of your child’s life. A criminal record can prevent a young person getting a job, going to university and even travelling abroad.