

The Core Stuff - Key messages to young people about drugs and alcohol

Brighton & Hove Council in consultation with young people and in line with guidance and recent research has developed a set of core messages to inform discussions with young people about drugs and alcohol. School staff should work within their school's Drug and Alcohol policy and when appropriate reinforce messages being given across Brighton & Hove

- 1. Make your own decisions; don't let others make them for you.** It's good to have a social life and have fun with friends. Despite what you seen on the TV or read in the papers and magazines not everyone is taking drugs and using alcohol. You can choose not to use drugs, alcohol or legal highs and still have a good time. Taking risks can be exciting but there are other ways to get thrills or to relax without using drugs or alcohol.
- 2. Why rush?** As a young person, your brain and body are still developing. Use of any drugs, alcohol or legal highs can harm this development. Remember; everyone is different, so the effects will be different for each individual. Just because friends say its good does not mean it will be for you! The effects will be dependent on our state of mind, your physical health and build, as well as your brain and body development.
- 3. Safe drinking limits?** Alcohol affects people in very different ways, and is a powerful and dangerous drug. Drinking too much in a single session can kill, and more often can lead to accidents, risky behaviour and getting into trouble with the Police. More and more people in their 20s are starting to develop life-threatening health problems because of the amount they've drunk during their teens.
- 4. If you do choose to drink or take drugs, look after your body and mind and know what you are taking** Eat properly, drink enough water to keep you hydrated and make sure you get enough sleep. Don't drink or use drugs if you're down, angry or depressed – it will only enhance those feelings. There are a lot of myths about what is and is not safe; if you want to know more go to www.talktofrank.com
- 5. Look after your mates** If your group is drinking or taking drugs, steer clear of trouble, stay alert when crossing roads, and don't leave anyone by themselves or with people they don't know. Plan how you're all getting home before you go out. **Always** call an ambulance if someone passes out or is seriously sick. Don't try and treat them yourselves, follow this advice and you could save a friends life.
- 6. Mixing drugs (poly-drug use), and mixing drugs with alcohol, is especially dangerous** Taking drugs is never risk-free. You increase the risks if you mix drugs or use them with alcohol. For example, mixing depressant like alcohol and GBL can result in overdosing, mixing stimulants and depressants like cocaine and alcohol results in coca ethylene, a highly toxic chemical reaction which puts enormous pressure on your heart.
- 7. Stay in control and stay protected** Using alcohol, drugs or legal highs can affect your judgement, and can make you do things that you wouldn't do normally. Drugs and alcohol can loosen your inhibitions; make sure you always carry condoms and make sure you use them if you need to. Never share snorting or injecting equipment; sharing can lead to HIV and Hepatitis.
- 8. Being caught with illegal drugs can seriously affect your future plans** Getting a criminal record can prevent you from working in certain jobs, stop you travelling to certain countries (including the USA and Australia) or affect your chances of getting into some college or universities.
- 9. Just because something is legal, it doesn't mean it's safe** Most legal highs have never been properly medically tested so no-one really knows what the effects could be to your physical or mental health. The Police will always take **any** powder or capsules from you as suspected illegal drugs. Prescription medication is illegal to take if not prescribed to you, and may put your life at risk if not taken in the way it was prescribed.
- 10. Know where to get help** If you're having problems to do with drugs, alcohol or legal highs, there **are** people who can help. If you are under 18 contact ru-ok for friendly, confidential advice on 293966 or visit www.ruokservice.co.uk. If you are over 18 contact CRI for non-judgemental, confidential advice on 01273 607575 or visit www.cri.org.uk