

Substance misuse awareness

The course you are about to start aims to provide you with an awareness of the key issues on substance use and misuse. You will develop a knowledge of drug types, the effects they have on individuals and society and how people and organisations respond to substance misuse.

Why should I do this course?

There are different reasons for wanting to know about drug issues. Some people may be concerned, for example, parents who want to know more, or it could be someone who has a personal interest.

For many people in society today, it could be knowledge which relates to an area of work. It may be that they want to start working in this area or that drug issues are already a part of their working role.

The government's new national strategy addresses the issues beyond what police and health services can achieve. The strategy recognises that other areas need to work together to support people dependent on drugs or alcohol, such as employment and housing. In society today, many different working roles will benefit from a knowledge of drug issues.

For example, these include:

- Youth workers.
- Teachers.
- Nurses or paramedics.
- Counsellors (can be specialist 'drug counsellors').
- Most forms of 'advisers' (could be housing, employment, social, etc.).
- Police services.
- Probation workers.
- Fitness instructors.
- Community workers.

Content

The course has one unit (workbook) which you must complete to achieve the qualification.

The unit covers four sections:

Section 1: Know which substances are commonly misused and why

Section 2: Recognise possible signs of substance misuse

Section 3: Be aware of social and personal effects of substance misuse

Section 4: Be aware of perceptions of, and responses to, substance misuse

There is an assessment that you need to complete at the end of the workbook once you have worked through each section and the learning activities. Your tutor will provide you with a copy of the assessment booklet. When you have completed this workbook, then you should attempt the assessment and submit it to your assessor/tutor who will mark it and give you detailed feedback on your progress. If you need any help or guidance, please contact your assessor/tutor.

You will find the assessment for this unit in the Candidate Workbook.

*Good luck
with your
studies!*



Know which substances are commonly misused and why

What is a drug?

A drug is a substance that affects the mind, the body or how the senses work.

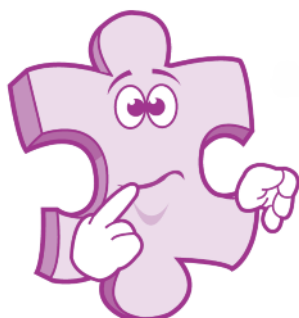
For example, some substances can make you feel more happy or more sad. Some drugs can give you more energy or make muscles grow. Some can change your view of how something looks or sounds. Some drugs can become addictive but this is not the case with all drugs.

If someone becomes addicted to a substance, they become dependent on that substance and will experience negative effects, which can be physical as well as mental, if they stop using the substance. Sometimes the dependence develops over time, where a person uses the substance for months or years and their use of it becomes habitual. Other times, people find themselves dependent on a substance very quickly.

Dependence can make it very difficult for a person to stop using a substance. This is why some people continue to use a substance, even though they know it may be affecting their health or having a negative impact on their life in another way. For example, if they struggle to pay for the drug they need, it could lead them to steal money to fund their dependence.

Drugs can come in many different forms:

- Some are synthetically (man-made) **produced from chemicals** such as LSD.
- Some are **natural and come from** trees, fungus, animals and plants such as cannabis.
- Some begin as a natural substance and are then **altered to produce something else** such as codeine, which is a 'pain killer' made from opium poppies.



While people may think of drug taking as a criminal offence, some drugs are legal and can be bought in shops and consumed in public. People often consider drugs as being bad for people; however, many drugs are positively used in health care to cure or control illness.

We hear about drug issues regularly in the media, for example in newspapers and on television or radio. You may also have contact with drugs in your own lives through personal or work experience.



Activity 1

What do you already know about drugs?

See if you can make a list of five drugs that you have heard of before.

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

On the next few pages you will look at some of the most common drugs and some of these may be on your list. You may also find out about some you didn't think of.

There is a table on the next page of the drugs which are commonly misused by people. This table includes the effect caused, the type of drug with some examples and some reasons why people use the drug.

There are different categories of drugs, all of which have different effects on the mind and body:

- **Stimulant** – produces feelings of excitement and feeling good and can then cause anxiety and depression.
- **Depressant** – relieves stress, anxiety and fear: addictive and can then cause stress and anxiety.
- **Hallucinogen** – experience of fantasy and altered perception (a change in how someone recognises the world). Effects can be unpredictable and may cause mental stress.

Type of drug	Effect	More details
Alcohol	Depressant	<p>The most frequently used legal drug, where a person may experience relaxation, less pain and poor co-ordination.</p> <p>Examples: beer, cider, wine and spirits.</p> <p>Possible reason for taking the drug: to relax and socialise with other people.</p>
Prescribed drugs	Depressant or stimulant	<p>These are given to people by doctors and are sometimes sold on and misused.</p> <p>Examples: valium, sleeping pills or 'over the counter' drugs such as codeine.</p> <p>Possible reason for taking the drug: to help a medical condition.</p>
Illegal recreational drugs	Stimulant	<p>Usually man-made drugs that people take to give them a 'high' or 'warm' feeling. These can also cause anxiety and high temperatures.</p> <p>Examples: ecstasy (MDMA), cocaine or M-cat.</p> <p>Possible reason for taking the drug: to enjoy a night out.</p>

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Type of drug	Effect	More details
Naturally occurring drugs	A range of effects	<p>Naturally occurring substances which can be used for the effects they cause. As with any drugs, they can have a range of side effects.</p> <p>Examples: magic mushrooms – hallucinogen.</p> <p>Caffeine – stimulant in coffee or in some energy drinks.</p> <p>Possible reason for taking the drug: they may take magic mushrooms to have a different experience or drink coffee to have more energy.</p>
Tobacco products	Stimulant or depressant	<p>Nicotine is present in tobacco and can appear to cause a calming or concentrating effect. Nicotine is highly addictive.</p> <p>Examples: cigarettes, cigars or smoking a pipe.</p> <p>Possible reason for taking the drug: to fit in with a social group – dependence.</p>
Illegal drugs	Stimulant or depressant	<p>Often addictive and can be dangerous.</p> <p>Examples: heroin or crack cocaine.</p> <p>Possible reason for taking the drug: to escape the real world.</p>

The table on the next page shows the most common drugs used in the UK in more detail. It gives you an idea of how harmful they are, their effects and how widely they are used. Most of the information in the table is not assessed, though it can be referred to when specific drugs are discussed during the course.

The table includes the number of people in the UK aged 16 to 59 who have taken the drug **this year**.

Drug name	Number of users	Information
Class A		
Powder cocaine	793,000	Made from the leaves of a coca bush. Increases confidence but also raises the heart rate and blood pressure and users crave the drug.
Crack cocaine	64,000	Cocaine can be mixed with other substances to form 'smokable' lumps. Gives an intense high but it is very addictive and causes aggression.
Ecstasy	517,000	Contains MDMA or similar. Is made from man-made chemicals. Causes adrenaline rushes and feelings of well-being, as well as high body temperature. Can also lead to anxiety for some users.
LSD	59,000	A man-made substance which has a strong effect on the mind. Effects include hallucinations and a loss of sense of time. A 'bad trip' can cause anxiety.
Magic mushrooms	132,000	Fungi containing the naturally occurring compound. Users may experience giggling fits, hallucinations and altered mental state.
Heroin	33,000	A sedative made from the opium poppy. Can be smoked or injected. Users feel slowed down and experience severe cravings for the drug.
Methadone	32,000	A man-made heroin substitute which produces similar though milder feelings and effects. It is still addictive and usually needs medical support to stop using.
Class A/B		
Amphetamines	308,000	Man-made drugs, such as 'speed', increase heart rate and alertness. Users may also feel paranoid. The newer form, methamphetamine, is very addictive.

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Drug name	Number of users	Information
Class B		
Cannabis	2,152,000	The cannabis 'sativa' plant or the resin from it. Cannabis is a relaxant but stronger forms (such as skunk) can also cause hallucinations and panic attacks.
Tranquillisers	145,000	Relieves tension and anxiety, though can be highly addictive.
Class C		
Anabolic steroids	50,000	Taken to build-up muscles and increase sporting ability. Users can become dependent and side effects include mood swings and high blood pressure.
Ketamine	159,000	Powerful anaesthetic (makes the body numb) that can also affect the mind. Can have a dangerous effect on breathing and heart function, leading to unconsciousness.
Not classified		
Amyl nitrite	351,000	Comes in a bottle and gives a short rush to the head after sniffing. Causes headaches and makes people feel faint.

(Source: British Crime Survey 2009/10)



The figures in the above table can be difficult to understand. To help imagine the picture in this country, the number of cannabis users in the last year is about 7% of the population aged 16 to 59. That is 7 people for every 100.