

Services For Education

DSL DISCUSSIONS... CHILD SUBSTANCE MISUSE

Raising the topic...

The brain undergoes a huge amount of development during the teenage years– therefore alcohol and drugs can potentially have a greater long-term impact on a teenager than it would for fully developed adult.

There are many reasons why young people misuse substances– including peer-pressure, experimentation, stress and pressures in life, parents with substance abuse issues or as self-medication for mental health conditions.

It's common for young people to start by using 'less hard' drugs or having the odd drink and then for things to escalate in terms of severity and frequency. Addiction is a progressive disease with long-term physical and mental health consequences, so early intervention is crucial to ensuring that things don't get worse.

Questions to discuss...

- What substances might the children be accessing and using?
- Where do we teach about drug and alcohol safety? How can we ensure this is effective?
- What might make children more vulnerable to substance misuse?
- What organisations can we reach out to for resources, speakers and support?
- How can we help young people to recognise they may have an issue and signpost them to support?
- How can we provide children with other coping mechanisms for dealing

What can you do?

Build positive relationships:

By knowing your children and creating positive relationships, you will be more likely to spot issues as they arise and children will feel more confident sharing their worries or issues with you.

Know your stuff:

Make sure staff know about the issue of drug and alcohol misuse– what substances might the children be using? What are the risks? What is the law?

Teach children to keep themselves safe:

High quality PSHE must be used to teach children about substance use, the short-term and longer-terms risks and what to do if they feel worried or out of control.

Engage with external organisations:

Where appropriate, make contact with external agencies who can provide support or resources to share in your setting.

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