Talk about it....

You can’t prevent your child from coming into contact with drugs and alcohol, but by talking openly with them about the issues, you can help them to stay safe and make positive choices.

It’s never too early to raise the subject, and it’s far better that you provide them with straightforward, factual information than for them to be misinformed by their friends. This booklet will help you to be better informed.

If drugs or alcohol are mentioned on television or in a newspaper, why not use the opportunity to have a discussion and ask your child what they know. You could also find out what drug and alcohol education is provided in your child’s school, so that you can help to reinforce what they learn in class.

Talk to them again at times in their lives when they’re experiencing stress e.g. exams or when they’re most likely to be exposed to drugs and alcohol such as nights out, and holidays.
Should you be worried?

Some young people will experiment with drugs, but the majority of those who do, won’t continue to use them. Even so, it is still worth being aware of signs that may indicate drug use:

Secretive behaviour, loss of interest in school, hobbies and friends, lack of concentration, apathy or aggression may all be indicators that there is a problem. Money going missing is another sign. However remember that there could be other explanations for this type of behaviour, so it’s important not to jump to conclusions.

If there is a problem, try to be calm and supportive and if you have concerns, get advice from T2, a local service, which offers drug and alcohol advice and support to young people and their parents.

T2, Drug Treatment and Advice Centre
Tel. 01628 683 260
Alcohol

It's easy to forget that alcohol is a powerful drug. Technically speaking, it's a depressant which means it slows down your body's response in all kinds of ways. Just enough can make you feel great, too much and it's all over.

Other names
Booze, Bevy, Drink, Grog, Plonk and Poison.

What it looks like & how it's taken
• Available in various liquid forms including fruit flavoured alcopops.

The effects
• Immediate effects vary depending upon amount used, age, gender, physical build, mental state and other factors.
• In the short-term, users feel relaxed with lowered inhibitions. Decision making and reaction times are affected.
• Excessive use can lead to emotional highs and lows, uncoordinated movement, blackouts and unconsciousness.
• Nausea and sickness at any point.

The risks
• Risk of death from suffocation as a result of inhaling vomit when unconscious.
• Overdose is a risk, particularly if mixed with other drugs.
• Long-term excessive use of alcohol causes illnesses such as chronic liver disease, stomach cancer and heart disease.
• Psychological and physical dependence on alcohol can creep up on you. Tolerance gradually increases the more you drink excessively on a regular basis, so you may find you’ll need more alcohol to reach the same state.

Legal status
• It is against the law for anyone under 18 to buy or attempt to buy alcohol.
• It is illegal for an adult to buy or attempt to buy alcohol on behalf of someone under 18.
• If you’re 16 or over (and accompanied by an adult) you can drink beer, wine or cider with a meal in a restaurant.
• If the police find someone who is under 18 in possession of alcohol, they have the power to confiscate it.
Gases, Glues & Aerosols

Solvents cover a huge number of substances: gas lighter refills, aerosols containing hairspray, deodorants and air fresheners, tins or tubes of glue, some paints, thinners and correcting fluids, cleaning fluids, surgical spirit, drycleaning fluids and petroleum products.

Other names
Sniff, Puff, Squirt.

What it looks like & how it’s taken
• Sniffed or breathed into the lungs from a cloth or sleeve. Some users put a plastic bag over their head and inhale that way.
• Gas products are sometimes squirited directly into the back of the throat.

The effects
• Effects feel similar to being very drunk.
• Users feel thick-headed, dizzy, giggly and dreamy.
• Users may hallucinate.
• Effects don’t last very long, but users can remain intoxicated all day by repeating the dose.

The risks
• Nausea, vomiting and black-outs.
• Squirting gas products down the throat may cause the body to produce fluid that floods the lungs and this can cause instant death.
• Risk of suffocation if the substance is inhaled from a bag over the head.
• Potentially fatal accidents can happen when the user is high because their senses are impaired.
• Long-term abuse of solvents can damage the brain, liver and kidneys.
• There’s a risk of fatal heart problems, which have been known to kill users the very first time they sniff.
• Some of these products are highly flammable and are a serious fire risk if used near naked flames/lit cigarettes.

Legal status
• It is not illegal to possess or use these products, but it is illegal to sell some products to people under 18 years old.
**Legal Highs**

The term ‘Legal Highs’ covers a range of substances that mimic the effects of illegal drugs. In many cases the composition of legal highs closely resembles that of banned substances except for slight chemical modifications to the compound. They are widely available through the internet and in ‘head shops’.

**What it looks like & how it’s taken**

- A range of pills and powders that are usually snorted, swallowed or smoked.

**The effects**

- The effects vary from substance to substance, but the aim is to get high or feel ‘a buzz’ without the risk of prosecution.

**The risks**

- Their chemical make-up is constantly changing.
- No safety tests have been performed on them to show they are safe.
- There is no long history of use, so the long term effects of using these substances are not known.
- Risks can include reduced inhibitions, drowsiness, excited or paranoid states, coma, seizures and death.
- These risks are increased if used with alcohol or other drugs.

**Legal status**

- It is not illegal to use or possess these drugs.
- However they may be made illegal in the future.
Cannabis

The most widely used illegal drug in Britain. It’s a naturally occurring drug made from parts of the cannabis plant. It’s a mild hallucinogen and often gives sedative-like effects that make some people feel chilled out and others feel sick. It’s not very expensive and widely available.

Other names

What it looks like & how it’s taken
• A solid dark lump known as ‘resin’.
• Leaves, stalks and seeds called ‘grass’.
• Stronger varieties of ‘grass’ are known as ‘skunk’.
• A sticky dark oil.
• Can be rolled (usually with tobacco) in a ‘spliff’ or ‘joint’, smoked on its own in a special pipe, or cooked and eaten in food such as cake.
• Can be smoked using a ‘bong’ (water cooled pipe) or bucket.

The effects
• Users feel relaxed and talkative.
• Cooking the drug then eating it makes the effects more intense and harder to control.
• May bring on a craving for food (referred to as ‘having the munchies’).

The risks
• Smoking it with tobacco may lead to users becoming hooked on cigarettes.
• Impairs the ability to learn and concentrate.
• Can leave people tired and lacking energy.
• Users may lack motivation and feel apathetic.
• Can make users paranoid and anxious, depending on their mood.
• Can trigger mental health problems in some, especially if these things run in the family.
• Smoking ‘joints’ over a long period of time can lead to respiratory diseases including lung cancer.

Legal status
• Class B drug (see page 18).
Mephedrone

Mephedrone was a ‘legal high’ until April 16th 2010 when it was made illegal following links to a number of deaths. It’s a stimulant drug belonging to the chemical family of cathinones which is a group of drugs that are ‘cousins’ of the family of amphetamine compounds.

Other names
Miaow Miaow, Magic, Bubble, Drone, MCAT, 4MMC, Meph and Top Cat.

What it looks like & how it’s taken
• White or off white powder which is snorted or swallowed.
• It should have virtually no smell. A strong odour means there may still be some poisonous chemical residue.

The effects
• Described as a mix between amphetamines, ecstasy and cocaine.
• Users feel alert, confident, euphoric and talkative.
• The effects last about an hour, but this can vary.
• Users are often left craving more.

The risks
• It can overstimulate the nervous system to cause fits, agitation and hallucinations.
• It can cause anxiety and paranoid feelings.
• Severe nosebleeds have been reported after snorting.
• Can overstimulate the heart and affects the circulation.
  Some users get blue or cold fingers.
• Can be fatal if mixed with alcohol or other drugs.

Legal status
• Class B drug (see page 18).
Magic Mushrooms

Magic Mushrooms grow in the wild. The most common is the Liberty Cap which is a small, skinny, tan coloured mushroom. Magic Mushrooms can make you hallucinate.

Other names
'Shrooms', Mushies.

What it looks like & how it’s taken
• These mushrooms are eaten raw, dried, cooked in food, or stewed into a tea.

The effects
• Users feel giggly and confident.
• 'Trips' last for about 4 hours. Colours, sounds, objects, time and movement can all be distorted.

The risks
• Can cause stomach pains, sickness and diarrhoea.
• Eating the wrong kind of mushroom can cause serious illness and even fatal poisoning.
• Can exacerbate existing mental health problems.

Legal status
• Class A drug (see page 18).
Ketamine

Ketamine is a short-acting but powerful general anaesthetic, which depresses the nervous system and causes a temporary loss of body sensation. That’s why it has been used for operating on humans and animals. It has powerful hallucinogenic qualities (causing a distortion of objects and reality).

**Other names**

Green, K, Special K, Super K, Vitamin K.

**What it looks like & how it’s taken**

- Legally produced ketamine comes in liquid form, which is usually injected.
- The illegally produced version usually comes as a grainy white powder, which is usually snorted but it may also be obtained as a tablet.

**The effects**

- Ketamine makes you hallucinate. You can ‘trip’ for up to 3 hours (depending on the dose).
- Can result in an ‘out of body experience’.
- Sometimes people are physically incapable of moving.

**The risks**

- Can cause panic attacks, depression and in large doses, can make mental health problems like schizophrenia worse.
- Large doses make it difficult to breathe and can cause heart failure.
- If you’re sick, there’s a risk you could choke on your vomit.
- It stops you feeling pain, so you’re in danger of injuring yourself badly without knowing it.
- Use has been linked to bladder and kidney damage.
- Sharing injecting equipment puts users at risk of dangerous infections like Hepatitis B or C and HIV/AIDS.

**Legal status**

- Class C drug (see page 18).
**Ecstasy (MDMA)**

The original designer drug. Ecstasy shot to fame in the early 90s as the rave culture took off and clubbers took it to stay awake and dance for hours. There’s a lot of controversy about the long-term side effects of ecstasy.

**Other names**

E, Pills, XTC, Brownies, Mitsubishi’s, Rolex’s, Dolphins.

**What it looks like & how it’s taken**

- Tablets of different shapes, sizes and colour (but often white) which are swallowed.
- Sometimes sold as powder which is snorted or smoked.

**The effects**

- E gives people an energy buzz.
- Users feel alert and in tune with their surroundings.
- Sound, colour and emotions seem much more intense.
- The effects last from three to six hours.
- Use has been linked to liver, kidney and heart problems.

**The risks**

- Can leave users feeling tired or depressed for days.
- Risk of overheating and dehydration if users dance energetically without taking breaks or drinking enough fluids (users should sip about a pint of non-alcoholic fluid such as fruit juice, sports drink, or water every hour).
- Some experts are concerned that use of ecstasy can lead to brain damage causing depression in later life.
- Use has been linked to liver, kidney and heart problems.

**Legal status**

- Class A drug (see page 18).
GHB (Gammahydroxybutrate) &
GBL (Gammabutyrolactone)

GHB and GBL are closely related. GBL converts to GHB shortly after entering the body. Both are dangerous drugs with sedative and anaesthetic effects. It’s hard to tell the difference between a dose that gives a pleasant buzz and one that could kill you. They are used as clubbing drugs. However, because they’re almost tasteless, they’re easily slipped into drinks and have been used in sex attacks.

Other names
GBH, Liquid Ecstasy, 1,4-BD.

What it looks like & how it’s taken
- Clear liquids with no smell, which taste slightly salty.
- Comes in small bottles or capsules. A teaspoon or capful is a normal dose.
- GHB sometimes comes in powder form.

The effects
- Can make you feel euphoric, sensual and uninhibited.
- Effects can last up to a whole day.

The risks
- Can be fatal if mixed with alcohol or other drugs.
- Higher doses can make the user feel dizzy and sleepy and can cause vomiting, muscle spasms and loss of consciousness.
- Overdoses will slow breathing down to a dangerously low rate.
- You can become physically dependent on GHB/GBL.

Legal status
- Class C drug
(see page 18).
Amphetamines
Speed is the street name for amphetamine. Like cocaine it’s a stimulant that people take to keep them awake and alert. It’s Britain’s least pure illegal drug. It’s often taken along with ecstasy.

Other names
Speed, Whizz, Uppers, Billy, Base, Paste, Phet, Dexies, Sulph.

What it looks like & how it’s taken
• Grey or white or pinkish powder that can be snorted, swallowed, dabbed on the gums, smoked, dissolved in a drink or injected.
• Tablets which are swallowed.

The effects
• Makes people feel wide awake, excited and chatty.
• Clubbers take it because it gives them the energy to dance for hours without getting tired.

The risks
• Whilst on the drug, some users become tense and anxious.
• Leaves users feeling tired and depressed for one or two days and sometimes longer.
• High doses repeated over a few days may cause panic and hallucinations.
• Long-term use puts a strain on the heart.
• Heavy long-term use can lead to mental illness.
• Sharing injecting equipment puts users at risk of dangerous infections like Hepatitis B or C and HIV/AIDS.

Legal status
• Class B drug, but Class A if prepared for injection (see page 18).
Cocaine
Cocaine is a stimulant with powerful, but short-lived effects.

Other names

What it looks like & how it’s taken
• White powder that is snorted up the nose using a straw, dabbed on the gums or sometimes dissolved and injected.

The effects
• Sense of well-being, alertness, confidence.
• The effects last at least 30 minutes.
• Users are often left craving more.

The risks
• It is addictive.
• Users are left feeling tired and depressed for one or two days or longer.
• Can cause chest pain and heart problems that can be fatal.
• Heavy use can cause convulsions.
• People who use it regularly often develop serious problems with anxiety and paranoia. It’s a known cause of panic attacks.
• Taking alcohol and cocaine together is particularly dangerous as the substances interact in the body to produce a toxic chemical called cocaethylene.
• Cocaethylene puts extra stress on the heart by increasing the heart rate and blood pressure. There is 21 times the risk of sudden death when combined.
• Sharing equipment (straws & needles) puts users at risk of infections like Hepatitis B or C and HIV/AIDS.

Legal status
• Class A drug (see page 18).
Crack Cocaine

Crack is a stimulant with powerful, but short-lived effects. Crack is much stronger and more addictive than cocaine.

Other names
Rock, Wash, Stone, Pebbles, Base, Freebase.

What it looks like & how it’s taken
• Small raisin-sized crystals which are smoked.
• ‘Speedballing’ is when crack and heroin are injected together.

The effects
• Sense of well-being, alertness, confidence.
• Users are often left craving more.
• Crack has the same effects as cocaine but with a more intense and shorter high of about 5 to 10 minutes.

The risks
• It is addictive.
• Users are left feeling tired and depressed for one or two days or longer.
• Can cause chest pain and heart problems that can be fatal.
• Heavy use can cause convulsions.
• People who use it regularly often develop serious problems with anxiety and paranoia. It’s a known cause of panic attacks.
• As the high is so intense, crack use is very difficult to control.
• Regular smoking can cause breathing problems.
• Sharing equipment (pipes & needles) puts users at risk of infections like Hepatitis B or C and HIV/AIDS.

Legal status
• Class A drug (see page 18).
**Heroin**

Heroin is a natural opiate. It’s made from morphine, which comes from the opium poppy. Like many drugs made from opium, heroin is a very strong painkiller.

**Other names**
Smack, Brown, Horse, Gear, Junk, H, Scag.

**What it looks like & how it’s taken**
- Brownish-white powder which is smoked, snorted or dissolved and injected.
- Sometimes heroin and crack are injected together and this is called ‘Speedballing.’

**The effects**
- Small doses give the user a sense of warmth and well-being.
- Larger doses can make them drowsy and relaxed.
- Heroin slows down body functioning and substantially reduces physical and psychological pain.
- Most users get a rush or buzz a few minutes after taking it.

**The risks**
- Heroin is addictive (even when smoked).
- Users who form a habit may end up taking the drug just to feel normal.
- Excessive amounts can result in overdose, coma and in some cases death.
- Regular injecting can result in significant damage to veins.
- Sharing injecting equipment puts users at risk of dangerous infections like Hepatitis B or C and HIV/AIDS.
- There’s also a risk of death due to inhaling vomit as heroin stops the body’s cough reflex working properly.

**Legal status**
- Class A drug (see page 18).
Methamphetamine (Crystal Meth)

Methamphetamine is a stimulant drug that is closely related chemically to amphetamine (speed). Like cocaine, crack and amphetamines, it has stimulant properties but is much longer acting. The crystalline form (sometimes called ‘Ice’) can be easily smoked and rapidly enters the system. It’s also long-acting compared to crack, so it’s an extremely powerful and addictive drug.

Other names
Ice, Glass, Tina, Christine, Yaba, Crank, Tweak.

What it looks like & how it’s taken
• It comes as a tablet, powder or crystals.
• The powder is snorted or injected.
• The crystal form is smoked in a pipe.

The effects
• Gives a very intense rush similar to crack but lasts between 4 and 12 hours. Users can stay awake for days.
• It can bring on a feeling of exhilaration and produces increased arousal and activity levels.
• People feel more awake and it suppresses appetite.
• Users are often left craving more.

The risks
• It is very addictive and people often end up bingeing on it.
• It can cause mental health problems.
• It can cause nausea, vomiting and diarrhoea.
• Teeth and gums can rot away (known as ‘meth mouth’).
• Some people get skin ulcers through picking at bugs they imagine are crawling under their skin.
• Sharing equipment puts users at risk of infections like Hepatitis B or C and HIV/AIDS.
• Using the drug increases sex drive and may lead to risky sexual behaviour.

Legal status
• Class A drug (see page 18).
### Drug Groups

#### Stimulants

**The Drugs**
- Caffeine
- Nicotine
- Cocaine
- Crack
- Amphetamine
- Mephedrone

**The Effects**
- Stimulates the central nervous system
- Increases heart rate
- Increases breathing
- Increases alertness
- Increases perceptions
- Increases activity

#### Hallucinogens

**The Drugs**
- Magic Mushrooms
- Ecstasy MDMA (Stimulant)
- Ketamine
- Cannabis (Depressant)

**The Effects**
- Alters perception of:
  - Sights
  - Sounds
  - Touch
  - Smell
  - Taste
  - Time
- Affects thinking and self-awareness

#### Depressants

**The Drugs**
- Alcohol
- Anti-Depressants
- Benzodiazapines (Valium)
- Solvents
- GHB/GBL

**The Effects**
- Depresses the central nervous system
- Decreases heart rate
- Decreases breathing
- Decreases alertness
- Decreases perceptions
- Decreases activity

#### Opiates

**The Drugs**
- Heroin
- Morphine
- Codeine
- Pethidine

**The Effects**
- Pain killers
- Relaxation of all body functions:
  - Thinking
  - Feeling
  - Breathing
  - Movement
  - Digestion
The Law

MISUSE OF DRUGS ACT 1971 - MAXIMUM PENALTIES

The misuse of Drugs Act 1971 divides controlled drugs into three categories: Classes 'A', 'B', and 'C'.

They are classified according to their degree of harmfulness or danger, both to the individual and to society at large, with penalties varying accordingly.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class</th>
<th>Possession</th>
<th>Supply</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class A</td>
<td>7 years imprisonment or a fine or both</td>
<td>Life imprisonment or a fine or both</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class B</td>
<td>5 years imprisonment or a fine or both</td>
<td>14 years imprisonment or a fine or both</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class C</td>
<td>2 years imprisonment or a fine or both</td>
<td>14 years imprisonment or a fine or both</td>
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Be aware that you may face criminal charges if your child produces, gives away or sells illegal drugs in your home. Allowing your child to smoke cannabis in your home is also illegal.
Contacts

LOCAL

• T2, Maidenhead: 01628 683 260. Drug information, advice and treatment centre for both adults and young people. Fortnightly parents’ and carers’ group “Chatterbox” in Maidenhead (every other Tuesday 6.30pm-8pm).

• Parent Support Line: 01628 685633 (open between 10am and 2pm weekdays). Confidential helpline for parents who have concerns about their child’s emotional needs, relationships and how they handle their feelings.

• Number 22, Maidenhead: 01628 636661. Free, confidential, one-to-one counselling service.

• Youth Talk, Windsor: 01753 842444. Free, confidential, one-to-one counselling service.

NATIONAL

• Drinkline 0800 917 82 82 www.drinkaware.co.uk
• National Drugs Helpline 0800 77 66 00 www.talktofrank.com
• Re-Solv (solvent abuse) 01785 810762 www.re-solv.org
• Family Lives (formerly Parentline Plus) 0808 800 2222 www.familylives.org.uk
• Adfam (family support) www.adfam.org.uk

For copies of this leaflet please contact:
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Maidenhead, Berks SL6 1RF.
Tel: 01628 796362
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