



A useful guide to Psychoactive Substances, Steroids, Cannabis and Alcohol

Wreckreations!

About Turning Point

**TURNING
POINT**
inspired by possibility



We are a national health and social care provider.

Our range of drug and alcohol services help people to reduce risks and harm as well as gain control of their lives through our innovative and flexible approaches. We know that successful treatment starts with being there at the right time - providing support when you're ready to take the next step.

As new drugs come onto the market our services must adapt and be flexible to ensure that we are providing the support that's needed. The increasing use of Novel Psychoactive Substances, continued use of steroids, cannabis and new alcohol trends over the last few years mean our services have had to find new ways to engage with new client groups. Services have introduced new approaches to engaging with people who may not have accessed support before or are using multiple substances.

This guide offers insight into four substances often chosen for recreational use but with significant risks associated to them. Some recreational drug taking for example can have a negative impact on your life long after the party is over. We know that realising your drug or alcohol use is out of control isn't easy.

That's why we offer free, non judgemental advice on how to stay safe if you're struggling to concentrate at school or college or hold down your job come Monday morning.

**We hope this guide will help you
make informed and safe choices.**



What are 'Legal Highs'?

'Cherry Bomb', 'Meow Meow' and 'Rockstars' are just some of the street names for Novel Psychoactive Substances (NPS) or '**Legal Highs**'. These drugs are deliberately designed using ingredients (chemicals) which replicate the effects of illegal substances such as cannabis or cocaine. But they differ from class A drugs so that some of them aren't currently classified as illegal.

NPS are sold online and on the high street, sometimes in places called '**Headshops**' which sell drug paraphernalia. Wrapped in brightly coloured packaging, NPS are branded under a variety of names which could be slang like '**Benzo fury**' or their chemical name such as MDAT. The danger is you never know what you're buying with NPS as the contents could change on a weekly basis and so you can't predict what the impact will be.

How Legal Highs affect your health

'**Legal Highs**' can be a misleading term. Although they've been dubbed '**legal**' that doesn't mean these substances are safe or approved for use. Because NPS are often new, there's been little or no research into their short and long-term impacts so the risks are unpredictable. And there's increasing evidence they're not harmless.

The contents of NPS packets are not consistent. So it's impossible to predict a safe dose when you don't know for sure exactly what you're taking and how it's going to affect you. Just because you were ok last time does not mean you'll be ok next time - it may not be the same strength or compound this time around. Please remember that these drugs can be a lot more dangerous when mixed with other substances and alcohol.

People who use them have reported side-effects such as headaches, nausea, palpitations and anxiety. Negative experiences include drowsiness and users of mephedrone for example have reported blue or cold fingers, probably because the drug affects the heart and circulation. Some deaths have been linked with people taking a cocktail of drink and drugs. The chemicals that are in NPS can make you feel anxious, paranoid or make you hallucinate. Your mental health can suffer too as studies in Manchester have demonstrated. As many as 97 deaths were associated with the use of '**Legal Highs**' in 2012. This is according to research by independent think-tank The Centre for Social Justice.

Four Categories of NPS

The Government has struggled to control the increasing availability of legal highs and assess them for safety because they're being created at a rapid rate.

Stimulants: these mimic substances such as amphetamine, cocaine and ecstasy.

They include mephedrone or 'Meow Meow' which is a white powder derived from a plant called khat.

Mephedrone triggers feelings ranging from euphoria to paranoia.

Downers: these mimic tranquiliser or anti-anxiety drugs especially those from the benzodiazepine family known as benzos.

They include Etizolam which can make you feel relaxed and calm but is also highly addictive.

Hallucinogenics: these mimic substances like LSD/Dissociatives.

They include methoxetamine or mexxy - which makes you feel detached from the rest of the world (Dissociatives) including Ketamine which can cause damage to your bladder.

The downside is it can make you hallucinate and lose awareness of your surroundings, or even lose consciousness, which can leave you in a vulnerable state.

Synthetic cannabis (cannabinoids):

these act on the brain in a similar way to the part of cannabis called THC which gives you a high.

They're traded under names including Clockwork Orange, Black Mamba and Spice.

Taking these may make you may feel giggly and talkative- or ill and paranoid.

These can be much stronger than THC and can result in anxiety, seizures, heart attack, convulsions and death. Instances of serious self mutilation while using synthetic cannabinoids have been reported. Substances can be presented as dried plant material sprayed with chemicals such as the JWH family of research chemicals, originating from investigations into Multiple Sclerosis, HIV/AIDS and Chemotherapy.

The Myths

That legal highs aren't as potent as other drugs

They can actually be more potent than cocaine, cannabis and ecstasy.

That they're 'safe'

The chemicals NPS contain have often never been used in drugs for human consumption before. So no one has tested them to show they're safe.

That they're legal

A drug sold as a 'legal' high may contain one or more substances that are actually illegal to possess. There is a Bill going through Parliament (2015) which aims to implement a blanket ban over all NPS drugs (see section: The Law)

Wreckreational

Our Wreckreational service was set up in direct response to the increase of Novel Psychoactive Substances (NPS) or so called '**Legal Highs**'. Wreckreational is based in the Integrated Substance Misuse Service in Wakefield in West Yorkshire and provides a team of experienced professionals dedicated to reducing harm to both the community and to those who use NPS and club drugs. Crucially, Turning Point understands there are many reasons for a drug and alcohol dependency, we always look at the whole person and then with this knowledge can offer a complete solution. From NPS awareness training for employers to structured support for those recovering from dependency, the team engages with people to provide the package support and information that they need. This is an approach we are rolling out across our services.



The Law

You're not currently breaking the law if you have legal highs solely for your own personal use.

However, some NPS may contain one or more substances which are actually illegal. In this case, you can still be prosecuted, even if you were sold drugs as legal.

Some 'highs' which were once legal for personal consumption are now outlawed. Mephedrone for example was banned in 2010, after the drug was linked to a number of deaths. The drug is now class B under the Misuse of Drugs Act which classifies drugs according to their relative harm. You could be given a maximum penalty of five years in prison for possession of mephedrone plus an unlimited fine. In addition, new laws outlined in May 2015 are set to restrict the availability of 'Legal Highs'.

Anyone found producing, selling, dealing, importing or exporting NPS now faces a maximum penalty of seven years in prison. Police are also set to get powers to seize and destroy NPS. This means they can search you, your home and car - officers can even obtain a search warrant to do this if necessary. This applies if they suspect you're breaking the law. They will treat you as if the drug is illegal, arrest you and take you to the police station. You won't be charged with any offence if the drug is analysed and found to be legal. The opposite is true if tests show the substance is illegal.

Case study:

“I felt like death had just stabbed me in the back.”

Vanessa Williams (not her real name)
was the “It” girl at school and had lots of friends.

Her older sister was also popular and got invited to plenty of parties where she got drunk and used cannabis. After one particular party, Vanessa said her sister came home and told her about this thing called mephedrone. “She said she snorted it and that really scared me”, recalls Vanessa, now 17.

“Being so young I thought she was going to die, but time went on and she kept doing it and I got used to her doing it and it started to not bother me that much.”

It wasn’t long before Vanessa was using mephedrone too.

“I’d never done drugs before and I remember the adrenaline running through my body,” she says. “My heart started racing with excitement and nerves, and I remember looking over to my sis to make sure she was okay with it”.

“Because she was high she didn’t mind and gave me a wink”. That first time she took mephedrone, Vanessa was 12 years old. She went from feeling “amazing” to “crying my eyes out feeling like I wanted to die” and that “death had just stabbed me in the back.” But she carried on, taking it week after week and ditched her friends to hang out with an older crowd. And she also began taking other drugs including cocaine and mushrooms. Having a good time became her sole ambition, her health began to suffer and she got into “massive arguments” with teachers.

Eventually, she sought help from Turning Point.

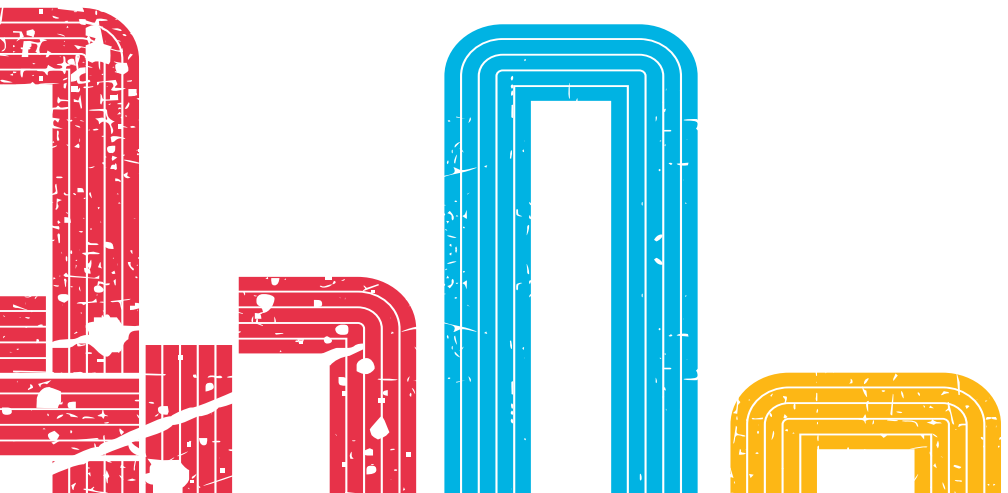
With our help, Vanessa says she’s back to being a “normal teen again” after giving up mephedrone and other drugs. “It’s so hard to snap yourself out of that lifestyle but it gets easier and you have to keep going if you want to make something of yourself in life”.

What are Steroids?

These are drugs which imitate the effects of certain natural hormones in the body.

It's anabolic steroids which people use to build muscles and define or change their body shape by 'bulking up'. Anabolic steroids are misused by some athletes such as sprinters and cyclists as well as bodybuilders to train harder and for longer. The reason they take them is that anabolic steroids, known as 'roids' or 'juice', are similar to the male hormone testosterone. Testosterone builds body muscle and helps burn fat. Many who use steroids think of themselves as healthy and fit, and are focused on 'self-improvement.' They don't see themselves as drug users even if they're injecting steroids.

Anabolic steroids are usually injected into your muscle. People who do inject are increasingly using needle exchanges. These harm reduction services allow people injecting drug users to obtain syringes. They were originally set up to ensure heroin users could access clean injecting equipment and avoid Blood Borne Viruses while being supported to stop using. Steroids can also come as tablets or creams and gels that are applied to the skin. Sustanon, Winstrol and Andriol are common types of anabolic steroids. Steroid use in sport is an ongoing issue. Use of performance enhancing drugs such as steroids is banned by the International Olympic Committee.



How Steroids affect your health

They can make you feel overly emotional, aggressive and irritable. You may experience extreme mood swings, depression, insomnia and anxiety. It can also impact on your sex life and your fertility.

What can happen is that your sex drive initially drops and steroids can also lower your sperm count. They can sometimes cause impact on your physical appearance. They can sometimes cause unwanted changes include baldness, acne, high blood pressure, overgrowth of the forehead and shrunken testicles.

In women, anabolic steroids can cause a deepened voice, their breasts can shrink or disappear and they can develop hair on the face and body. Long-term steroid use has been linked to prostate cancer, high blood pressure and heart attacks as well as liver and blood disorders.

If you're using needles and don't practice safe injecting techniques then you're risking your health.

Anyone who shares needles or uses dirty ones is exposing themselves to an increased risk of HIV and hepatitis.

The Law

It's not an offence to possess anabolic steroids for personal use. You can be arrested though if the drugs are counterfeit and not in a medicinal form ie prescribed by a doctor. They're classed as prescription-only drugs. So only a pharmacist can sell them and only to someone presenting a doctor's prescription. They're a Class C drug which means supplying them is breaking the law.

Reducing the Risks

Don't adopt other user's regimes.
Instead, stick to the smallest dosage.

- Counterfeit steroids and fakes are a hazard.
Don't use a drug if you have any doubt.
- Learning safe injecting techniques minimises the risks.
- See your GP if you think you're addicted.
You'll be referred to a specially trained counsellor.
- Turning Point offers outreach for example in local gyms and fitness centres for steroid users.
We also offer advice on diet, safe injecting and harm minimisation.

Smart Muscle Clinics

In London, Turning Point runs a free and confidential drop-in service for anyone using or thinking of using anabolic androgenic steroids, human growth hormone and other performance and image enhancing drugs. These Smart Muscle clinics offer needle exchange services and advice on nutrition, safe injecting and training goals.

The team provide support for those who may be affected by body-image issues, who may require further help to overcome them. This is in addition to the free needle exchange and blood-test programme, which help users to keep themselves safe from blood-borne viruses. As most of those who inject steroids do not consider themselves to have a 'drug problem', and might not feel comfortable attending a traditional drug service, we work closely with gyms to support safe needle exchange and offer specific advice on training, nutrition and how to track progress, for those who are willing to try natural alternatives to steroid use.

“Many people who visit the clinic find that they are able to stop taking steroids, or even not start in the first place, and still achieve their personal objectives.”



What is Cannabis?

The most widely used illegal drug in Britain, cannabis has been tried by about 10 million people in the UK. The numbers using cannabis or marijuana though are falling especially among 16 to 24-year-olds. The drug is made from the cannabis plant found wild in many parts of the world and also cultivated in Britain. Cannabis comes in several different forms.

'Weed' or 'grass' is made from dried leaves and flowers which are produced by the female plant. It resembles dried herbs. Skunk is also produced from the female plant, but is from a more potent variety of the cannabis plant than 'grass'. Then there's resin or 'hash' which

is extracted from the flowers and resembles a black or brown soft lump. Cannabis also comes as an oil although this is much less common. A chemical called THC is the main ingredient in cannabis which makes you feel happy and relaxed. It can also alter your senses leading to hallucinations (see section: How Cannabis Affects Your Health). The vast majority of cannabis supplied on the UK market comes from illegal cannabis farms which are often located in homes or warehouses. The impact is that this home-grown cannabis has a higher THC content than before. However, there's conflicting evidence on whether or not cannabis is actually becoming stronger.

The Myths **Cannabis is a 'less serious' drug than others**

It's not and you can be arrested (see section: The Law)

That it's ok to take cannabis and drive

Driving with even a low level of cannabis in your blood or being high from cannabis is illegal.





How Cannabis Affects Your Health

Just because cannabis is natural, that doesn't mean it's safe. Indeed, it can have very real harmful effects on your body and mind. The drug affects the working of your brain. It can make you feel anxious, paranoid, less motivated and interferes with your ability to concentrate and remember things. If you're already feeling anxious or depressed then cannabis can make these problems worse. And regular use of cannabis from a young age can lead to an the increased risk of developing a serious mental illness such as cannabis-induced psychosis. If you eat cannabis then it takes longer to get into your system - so it's too late to do anything if any unpleasant side-effects develop. You're also taking a large dose in one go which makes it harder to avoid a negative reaction. There's also the risk to your lungs. Cannabis contains a range of harmful chemicals similar to those in tobacco smoke.

Smoking the drug has been linked to diseases such as lung cancer, although the impact is unclear given most cannabis users also smoke tobacco.

The Law

Cannabis may be easily available but it's also a Class B drug. That means you could end up with a caution if it's the first time you've been caught. If you've been found in possession before then you face a fine or arrest. Possession is illegal even if you are using it for pain relief and the penalty for police finding you with the drug is up to five years in prison. Allowing your child to use cannabis in the home is also illegal. A minimum 12 month driving ban and a hefty fine or up to 6 months in prison or both if you are caught driving with even a low amount of cannabis in your blood from having smoked it days or even weeks before.

Carrying large amounts of the drug also puts you at risk of being charged with intent to supply.



About Alcohol

Alcohol is a legal drug used by millions of people. It's also much more affordable now than twenty years ago so is easy to access. However, drinking to excess or misusing alcohol has significant impacts on you and other people. You may find it hard to hold down a job and it can also lead to a family breakup which has lasting consequences for you and your children.

A report by Turning Point called Bottling Up: The Next Generation found that thousands of children living with parents with a drink problem are at risk of depression and anger issues.

Alcohol misuse costs England around £21 billion per year in healthcare, crime and lost productivity costs.

In the UK in 2012-13, there were more than a million cases where people were admitted to hospital for issues related to alcohol.

The official guidance is men should not regularly drink more than 3-4 units of alcohol a day.

Women are advised to limit themselves to no more than 2-3 units a day.

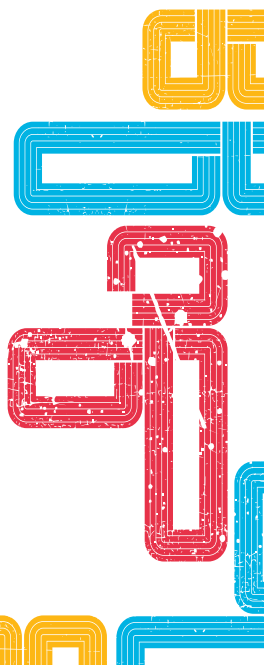
How Alcohol Affects Your Health

There's no doubt alcohol gives you a temporary 'high' however, after the high comes the low. Alcohol is actually a depressant, which slows down your reactions and affects your mood. Some people also use alcohol to mask mental health issues, so they may end up not seeking support and getting the treatment they need.

Alcohol also lowers your inhibitions which can lead to risky behaviour such as unprotected sex.

Being intoxicated also puts you at risk of injury because alcohol clouds your judgement and makes you more clumsy. Alcohol also affects you physically. It can lead to short-term impotence or longer term loss of sex drive. It also causes heart disease, high blood pressure, stroke, liver damage, pancreatitis and increases your risk of certain cancers such as mouth, gullet and bowel cancer.

You should be very careful about abruptly stopping drinking if you think you are physically dependant. This may cause a seizure and you should always seek medical advice if you are concerned about this.



The Law

It's illegal to sell alcohol to anyone under the age of 18 or to buy it on their behalf.

And you're breaking the law if you are under 18 and you buy alcohol or drink it in a licensed premises.

This doesn't apply if you're 16 or 17 years old and accompanied by an adult as it is legal to drink, but not buy, beer, wine and cider with a table meal.

If you drive and you're over the legal alcohol limit then you could face a six month prison sentence.

In England and Wales, the alcohol limit for drivers is 80 milligrams of alcohol per 100 millilitres of blood.

Reducing the Risks

- Try and have two alcohol-free days a week.
- It's best to avoid alcohol altogether if you're planning to be or are pregnant.
- Stick to soft drinks or alcohol-free beers if you're socialising and have to drive home.
- See your GP if you're concerned you have a problem. They can refer you for specialist support.

Case study:

“If I opened a bottle of vodka I’d have to see the end of it”

Going to the pub as a teenager was just part of his normal everyday routine for Josh Crampton (not his real name). However, his habit turned into alcohol addiction.

“I don’t think I’ve ever been in a pub for a few” says Josh. “I’m very socially anxious and the confidence thing played a part, it (alcohol) masked this. Now I’m sober I realise this because I feel stripped bare without alcohol.” At the height of his drinking Josh was on 18 cans of Guinness a day and describes himself as a binge drinker. “If I opened a bottle of vodka I’d have to see the end of it.”

His body built up such a tolerance to alcohol that he’d begin craving a drink and suffered withdrawal symptoms. This led to seizures - one was so severe that he dislocated his arm.

But this didn’t stop him drinking but what did was being unable to live with the nausea he felt every day along with the support that he received from Turning Point’s substance misuse service. They did a liver function test which reduced Josh to tears when it revealed he had “the liver of an old person.” He was given medication, detox pills and a keyworker who “saw the nervousness in me” and gave him the support he needed to quit.

It was through Turning Point that he also discovered photography which has become his passion.

Now in his 30s, Josh has been sober for two years and has learned who his friends are now he’s not drinking which is “a very short list”. He’s also discovered how “awesome” it is to wake up feeling well. “To me that’s freedom. Alcohol was a trap and I’m not trapped anymore”.



Our Resolution Clinic

Alcohol misuse can affect anyone but many people find it difficult to access services when they're working, looking after their family or maintaining other demands and responsibilities. Turning Point therefore introduced The Resolution Clinic, an evening-only service specifically aimed at those who may not want or be able to access traditional substance misuse services, but who may need advice on their alcohol and/or drug use.

Professionals in London and across the UK often find themselves working in stressful, high-pressured jobs with an after-work 'pub culture' that many feel pressured to join in with. The Resolution Clinic has been developed to meet the needs of this wider treatment population by offering the chance for people in this situation to speak in confidence with trained recovery workers, who can help identify the underlying causes of problematic substance misuse, and help individuals create and follow a treatment plan. There is also a nurse available who can discuss community and residential detox and medication to help with alcohol withdrawals or cravings.

A large proportion of those who visit the clinic had been unaware that they had a problem, and were referred by their GP after seeking help for another health issue. Once in contact with the clinic, however, very few drop out of treatment, and the clinic has a very good success rate in helping people control their substance misuse.

Alcohol and Drugs: Safety messages

**“It’s great fun”
“They’re harmless”
“It’s not affecting my life”
“I’m in control”**

These are just some of the ways to justify taking drugs or having a drink problem. The reality is that alcohol and drugs misuse can result in long-term health issues and even death.

The best way to protect yourself from drugs is to not take them. Knowing the facts is the only way you can make an informed decision. Don’t let your party drug taking get the better of you or spiral out of control. Don’t share needles, mix drugs with alcohol or try something when you don’t know what’s really in it. And don’t be pressurised into taking drugs. The truth is your real mates will respect you more if you say ‘no’. With alcohol, limit your intake and give yourself days off, or seek help to give up if you’re dependent.

We know it isn’t always easy to realise that you have a problem. Often friends and family will notice first. And it’s not easy to tell someone about it when you do realise you need help. You’re not alone if you have a problem or just need advice on reducing your risks. There is help out there. We want people to stay safe by making informed decisions and having access to support.

We offer...

Here is a list of the type of services and support we offer:

- Young People’s services
- Group workshops
- 1:1 counselling
- Key worker support
- Peer Mentors and peer support
- Substitute prescribing
- Mindfulness-based relapse prevention
- Criminal justice interventions
- Parenting workshops
- Five-step support including Five-step families and carers group
- Complementary Therapies, such as acupuncture
- Employment support
- Housing support
- Needle Exchange
- Community alcohol detox
- Referral to inpatient support and rehab
- Community outreach teams

Where To Find Out More

Staying informed is vital and using all the information available to you can be an important boost to your recovery. Turning Point provides a range of services for alcohol and drugs misuse.

Details of your nearest Turning Point service can be found on our website www.turning-point.co.uk

Rehabilitation and Recovery

We offer clinical care, individual care plans, personal and group therapy, alongside residential rehab services.

We'll also help you learn new skills, offer advice on family, employment, debt, housing and general health issues, so you're ready for a life free of addiction.

Residential Detox

We provide intensive treatment through residential detox to help you tackle your addiction in a low risk and supportive environment.

Through our specialist treatment centres we provide different levels of services so you can take things at your own pace.

Supported Housing

We provide supported housing to help you find your feet and overcome addiction.

This is together with our support and outreach services which help you with everyday tasks like shopping and making appointments.

We'll give you the help you need to tackle your issues and move on with your life.

Integrated Services

Recovering from substance misuse can mean tackling a range of wider issues.

These include looking after your health and housing to getting qualifications and finding a job.

Our open access community services are designed to provide the intensive, often long-term, practical support you need.

Outreach

We're reaching out to all of society, including those who are often overlooked such as street drinkers, sex workers, and people in crisis.

This is through services like Wreckreational, our Needle Exchanges and through services based in hospital A & E units.

Services for Offenders

We provide comprehensive and specialist support for offenders with drug and alcohol misuse problems.

We believe that treatment alone is not enough.

Our rapid-access personalised criminal justice services and Drug Intervention Programmes will help you tackle your addiction at every stage.

Here you will also find links to associated support in your area, or to organisations that can answer your questions.

Addiction Advisor

Addiction Advisor provide free medical information, research articles and news on drug and alcohol addictions to help inform professionals.

www.addictionadvisor.co.uk

Time To Talk

Time To Talk provides easy-to-use guides and tips to help you have ongoing conversations with your kids to keep them healthy and drug-free.

www.time-to-talk.org.uk

Mentoris

Mentoris is the leading international NGO voice of drug abuse prevention.

Mentoris work with their partners to reach out to children and young people.

www.mentorfoundation.org

FRANK

FRANK helps you find out everything you might want to know about drugs.

www.talktofrank.com

Drugsline

Drugsline is an independent drugs crisis, information and support charity.

It provides free and confidential information and support for people with alcohol and drugs related issues, their families and friends.

They also provide a comprehensive range of drug and alcohol prevention and awareness education programmes to schools, youth groups and the wider community.

www.drugsline.org

Adfam

Adfam provide support for families and carers affected by alcohol and drugs.

www.adfam.org.uk

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