



Drug Misuse Safeguarding Fact Sheet



Drug Misuse

We often incorrectly refer to drugs, and drug misuse, in a very general sense. However, it really is important that we understand the different categories of drugs, so that, in turn, we can accurately spot the symptoms of drug misuse and ensure that we take appropriate safeguarding measures. There are four predominant categories of drugs, based on their effects:

- Stimulants (e.g. cocaine)
- Depressants (e.g. alcohol)
- Opioids/Opiates (e.g. heroin)
- Hallucinogens (e.g. LSD).

Stimulants

Typically, people using stimulants present to be:

- Overly energetic
- Overly alert
- Overly talkative
- Overly active
- Very excited.

Depressants (sedatives)

Typically, people using depressants present to be:

- Extremely relaxed
- Extremely chilled out
- Extremely mellow

However, depressants can cause possible paradoxical effects, such as anxiety, nightmares and aggression.

Opioids/Opiates

Typically, people using opioids/opiates present to be:

- In a dreamy state
- Drowsy.

Hallucinogens

Hallucinogens typically vary a lot. The same drug may have different effects at different times. People using hallucinogens may:

- Exhibit detachment from their surroundings
- Experience mood swings
- Experience an altered sense of space and time
- Experience hallucinations, illusions and distortions of reality
- Experience feelings of insight
- Have mystical or religious experiences.

It is important to note that people may not necessarily exhibit these symptoms/behaviours, and that someone showing such symptoms may not necessarily be taking drugs. Drug misuse can cause physical side effects, some of which can be unpleasant or dangerous. For further information on the symptoms and effects of illicit drug use, we suggest visiting websites such as Talk to Frank.

Resources that provide information, advice and guidance relating to drug use include:

- NHS Drug Addiction Support Services
- Turning Point
- Talk to Frank.

The Skills Network always suggests that your first point of call over concerns relating to drugs and substance misuse should be to your GP, who can provide advice and guidance.

If you have a safeguarding concern regarding drugs and substance misuse, please contact The Skills Network's Designated Safeguarding Lead, Paul Wakeling (Director of Curriculum and Quality), via email at: safeguarding@theskillsnetwork.com or on **01757 600706**.

Helplines & Support

NHS Drug Addiction Support Services - <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/healthy-body/drug-addiction-getting-help/>

Turning Point - <https://www.turning-point.co.uk/services/drug-and-alcohol-support.html>

Talk to Frank - <https://talktofrank.com/>

