

# Reducing the risk of harm to children in your household



Advice for parents who use drugs or alcohol



# Medication

- Always store your medication in the bottle or box in which it was originally dispensed and make sure it is clearly labelled.
- All medication should be kept out of reach of children in a high cupboard or one with child proof locks. Remember, children grow and like to climb.
- Do not have medication on your person, such as in a handbag.
- Methadone should **not** be stored in the fridge.
- Methadone bottles should be washed out after use and disposed of with the lid securely on.
- For extra safety you can store your medication in a lockable “cash” box.
- If there are children in the household, Turning Point will give you a free lockable safe storage box.
- Should you need to have your medication with you when away from home, make sure it is in an appropriate child proof container.
- Ask your pharmacist for help if required.
- Medication should only be taken by the person for whom it is prescribed. It is dangerous and can be fatal for children to take medication not prescribed for them.
- Tell children in a way that they will understand, not to touch or take anyone else’s medicine or medication.
- Keep alcohol in a safe place.
- In event of accidental taking, seek immediate medical attention by calling an ambulance.



# Paraphernalia

If you have children or not please:

- Store your works away in a safe place out of the reach of children. Remember, children grow and like to climb.
- Make sure you have access to clean equipment.
- Dispose of all of your injecting and other equipment **safely**.
- Sharps boxes and clean paraphernalia are widely available. Information and needle exchange are available from Turning Point or your pharmacy.



# Driving

- If you drive while under the influence of alcohol or drugs you are placing your children, yourself and other road users at risk. If you are unsure whether you can drive on your prescribed medication, then speak to your Recovery Worker / Case Manager or doctor.



# Care of Children

- It is essential to ensure that your children are properly supervised while you are under the influence of drugs or alcohol.
- If both you and your partner use drugs or alcohol, then you may have to arrange to use, one at a time, so that one of you is always keeping an eye on the children.
- Leave a sufficient time delay between using so that one of you is always alert enough to respond to the children.
- Make sure a **responsible adult**, that you know well, is around.
- Children can be very sensitive to changes in your mood particularly when you are coming down or experiencing withdrawal. Plan ahead for these times to ensure that your ups and downs don't affect them.
- **You should never sleep together with your baby if any of the points below apply to you, or even if you just feel very tired. You must be especially careful when giving feeds that you are not in a position where you could both fall asleep in the bed, an armchair or on the sofa together.**
- **Some parents choose to bed-share with their babies. This means that their baby shares the same adult bed for most of the night, and not just to be comforted or fed. It is important for you to know that there are some circumstances in which this can be very dangerous.**
- **Bed sharing increases the chance of SIDS and is particularly dangerous if:**
  - **Either you or your partner smokes (even if you do not smoke in the bedroom)**

- **Either you or your partner has drunk alcohol or taken drugs (including medications that may make you drowsy)**
- **Similarly, bed sharing with a baby of low birth weight (2.5kg or 5 ½ lbs or less) or a premature baby (37 weeks or less) is strongly linked to an increased risk of SIDS.**
- <https://www.lullabytrust.org.uk/safer-sleep-advice/co-sleeping/>
- With older children, develop safety plans including who they should contact in an emergency. Have up to date telephone numbers available, including how to call an ambulance if necessary.
- Think about who the children are coming into contact with. Children are more aware than you would think about what is going on around them which is worth remembering if you ever score, deal or use when they are around.
- Don't leave your children with people you don't know.



# Routines

- Maintaining routines for children around sleeping, eating, going to school, and other activities is essential. It is also essential that they attend their health checks.
- It may be necessary to ask for the help of a close friend or family member to enable you to do this.
- For younger children it is important to access local play groups and nurseries. This can also give you a break.
- Advice and information is available from your health visitor and children's centres. Your children's school may have information about local activities and after school clubs.



# Violence and conflict

- Research shows that witnessing violence and conflict in the household is one of the most damaging things that can happen to children and young people.
- Further information, regarding seeking/getting help and support if you are experiencing domestic violence, is available from your case manager.



## **But my kids don't know that I use...**

- Research shows that from about four years of age, and often younger, children are aware of their parents' drinking and drug use.
- While you may protect your children from seeing you use drugs or drink, they are often very aware of conversations that you are having and other things that are going on in their home.
- They can also be particularly affected by changes in your mood.
- Children can often feel they need to 'look after' their parents. This can put a lot of pressure on them.
- Older children and young people have said that they would prefer that their parents were open with them about what they are doing. It can be difficult to find the words to do this. Simple, honest explanations are often best. It can help to talk this over with someone that you trust before approaching the subject with your children.



# Asking for help

- If you are using drugs or alcohol it can be very scary to ask for help because of fear of being 'found out' and people questioning your ability to look after your children.
- Parenting is not an easy task. Like many other parents, parents who use drugs and alcohol need extra support at times.
- Ensuring that there are people around who can help you and your children can make a real difference to them and you.

# **For advice and support in Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland, contact:**

## **Turning Point**

Telephone: 0330 303 6000

**Leicester City:** 2 Eldon Street, Leicester, LE1 3QL

Opening hours: Monday, Tuesday, Friday and Saturday 9am-5pm, Wednesday 9am to 8pm and Thursday 8am to 7pm

**Coalville:** 42 High Street, Coalville, LE67 3EE

Opening hours: Monday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday 9am to 5pm. Tuesday 9am to 6.30pm

**Loughborough:** 55/56 Woodgate, Loughborough, LE11 2TZ

Opening hours: Monday 9am to 6.30pm, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday 9am to 5pm

## **Leicestershire & Rutland Local Safeguarding Children Board**

[www.lrsb.org.uk](http://www.lrsb.org.uk)

## **Leicester Safeguarding Children Board**

[www.lcitylscb.org](http://www.lcitylscb.org)

