

Reducing the risk of harm to children in your household

Advice for parents who use **drugs** or **alcohol**



Medication



- Always store your medication **e.g. methadone / GP prescribed 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 with child proof locks. Remember, children grow and like to climb and pull things down.
- Do not have medication on your person, such as in a handbag.
- Medication 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. You should never give a child medication that is not prescribed or suitable for them. If a child ingests your medication, you should seek immediate medical attention as this could be life threatening.
- 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. Ensure that alcohol is not kept in the fridge, or any cupboards easily accessed by children.
- In the event of accidental taking, seek immediate medical attention by calling an ambulance.

Paraphernalia



Whether or not you have children, please:

- Store your substances/works/injecting kit/drug paraphernalia 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 injecting equipment. Do not re-use equipment and dispose of immediately after use.
- Dispose of all your injecting and other equipment safely, using a Sharps box and appropriate disposal via pharmacies and needle exchange programmes.
- Safe disposal 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, Prescriber or GP.

Drugs and driving: the law

It's illegal to drive if either:

- you're unfit to do so because you're on legal or illegal drugs
- you have certain levels of illegal drugs in your blood (even if they have not affected your driving)

Legal drugs are prescription or over-the-counter medicines. If you're taking them and not sure if you should drive, talk to your doctor, pharmacist, or healthcare professional.

The police can stop you and make you do a 'field impairment assessment' if they think you are under the influence of drugs. This is a series of tests, for example asking you to walk in a straight line. They can also use a roadside drug kit to screen for cannabis and cocaine.

If they think you're unfit to drive because of taking drugs, you'll be arrested and will have to take a blood or urine test at a police station.

You could be charged with a crime if the test shows you've taken drugs.

Prescription medicines

It's illegal in England, Scotland, and Wales to drive with legal drugs in your body if it impairs your driving.

It's an offence to drive if you have over the specified limits of certain drugs in your blood and you have not been prescribed them.

Talk to your doctor about whether you should drive if you've been prescribed any of the following drugs:

- amphetamine, for example dexamphetamine or selegiline
- clonazepam
- diazepam
- flunitrazepam
- lorazepam
- methadone
- morphine or opiate and opioid-based drugs, for example codeine, tramadol, or fentanyl
- oxazepam
- temazepam

You can drive after taking these drugs if:

- you've been prescribed them and followed advice on how to take them by a healthcare professional
- they are not causing you to be unfit to drive even if you're above the specified limits

You could be prosecuted if you drive with certain levels of these drugs in your body and you have not been prescribed them.

More information can be found here: www.gov.uk/drug-driving-law

Care of Children



- It is essential to ensure that your children are properly supervised while you are under the influence of drugs or alcohol. Don't use in front of children and not in the same house.
- If both you and your partner use drugs or alcohol, then you should 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 look after and respond to the children.
- Make sure a **responsible adult**, that you know well, is around to care for the children whilst you are under the influence or withdrawing.
- Children need their parents and 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 give your baby or toddler your medication or drugs to soothe them. This is very dangerous. You should never transfer a dummy that has been in your mouth to the mouth of a baby.**
- 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. Remember this is a big responsibility for children of any age.
- 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. You should never score, deal, or use when they are around.
- Don't leave your children with people you don't know as this can lead to abuse or other forms of harm.

Safer Sleeping



- 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.
- 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.
- Unsafe bed sharing increases the chance of 'Sudden Infant Death Syndrome' (also known as SIDS) and accidental suffocation, 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
 - Either you or your partner has 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 a significantly increased likelihood of death (SIDS).
 - Please follow this link for more in-depth advice around safer sleeping www.lullabytrust.org.uk/safer-sleep-advice/co-sleeping/

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 are available from your health visitor and children's centre. 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.
- Poorly resolved parental conflict places children's mental health and future development at risk.
- The impact of parental conflict can happen without the child being present to witness it, due to the impact on the parent-child relationship.
- Children won't feel safe if the adults in the home don't. Children will need reassurance about their safety – it's not just about being safe; it's about feeling safe.
- 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...

Shhh...

- 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.

Shhh...

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

38 Friar Lane, Leicester, LE1 5RA

Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday 9am to 5pm

Wednesday 9am to 7pm and Saturday 9am to 1pm

Coalville

42 High Street, Coalville, LE67 3EE

Opening hours: Coalville Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm

Loughborough

55/56 Woodgate, Loughborough, LE11 2TZ

Opening hours: Loughborough Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm

Hinckley

First Floor, Phase 1 Stockwell House, New Buildings,
Hinckley, Leicestershire, LE10 1HW

Opening Hours: Mon-Thurs 9am-5pm

Leicestershire & Rutland Safeguarding Children Partnership (SCP)

www.lrsb.org.uk

Leicester Safeguarding Children Partnership Board

www.lcitylscb.org