

Young People and Substance Misuse in WORCESTERSHIRE

A summary report of the Health Related Behaviour Survey

These results are the compilation of data collected from a sample of secondary school pupils in Worcestershire during Summer and Autumn 2004. This work was commissioned and funded by Worcestershire Substance Misuse Action Team (SMAT) to collect reliable information about young people's lifestyles. The survey was co-ordinated by the Worcestershire Public Health Network.

Collecting the figures

Schools were recruited from across the county and asked to sample sufficient numbers of pupils to give a representative picture of the school.

Teachers were briefed on how to collect the most reliable data and then pupils anonymously completed the questionnaire. The sample sizes are shown in the table below.

Completed questionnaires were then returned to SHEU in Exeter for processing.

The sample

The study was designed to give robust information for the whole of Worcestershire, as well as a service for the schools involved.

The figures seen in the complete Worcestershire sample are accurate to at worst $\pm 1.5\%$. The figures seen in one sub-group, like Year 10 females, are accurate to about $\pm 5\%$.

↑ Comparisons ↓

Comparisons have been made with samples of pupils and students from other areas: a large sample of pupils from schools across the UK. Differences that reach 5% or more are listed on page 7.

LINKS

We are studying the links between different parts of young people's lifestyles, and some of the early findings are given on page 6.

1240 young people were involved in the survey

Area	Worcestershire 2004		Reference Sample	
	Year 8	Year 10	Year 8	Year 10
Year group	12-13	14-15	12-13	14-15
Age	12-13	14-15	12-13	14-15
Boys	293	353	1424	1436
Girls	269	325	1318	1314

...plus some additional pupils from other year groups.

We asked about

Drugs, Alcohol and
Tobacco

Citizenship

School and Career

Leisure and Work

Emotional Health and
Well-being

Healthy Eating

Relationships and Sexual
Health

Health and Safety

Physical Activity



Schools
Health
Education
Unit

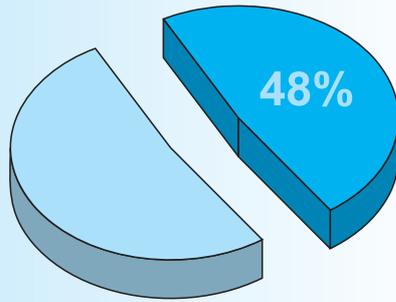
SHEU
The Schools Health Education Unit
Tel: 01392 66 72 72
www.sheu.org.uk

The Unit specialises in questionnaire surveys of children and young people for Local Authorities, PCTs, voluntary agencies, charities, schools and colleges and other partnerships. SHEU is also able to undertake consultation, monitoring and evaluation exercises, and bespoke research.

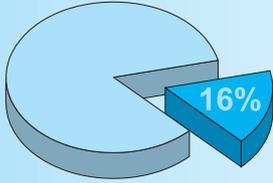
Headline Statistics

TOBACCO

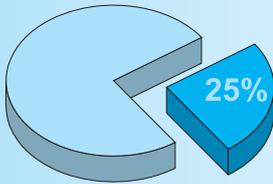
48% say they have ever tried smoking in the past or smoke now.



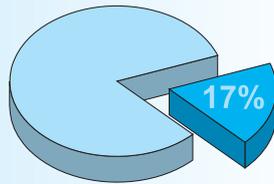
16% in the survey smoked at least one cigarette during the last 7 days.



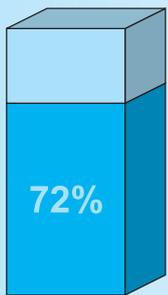
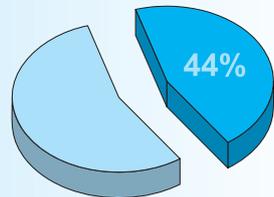
There is a marked gender and age difference, with older girls most commonly reporting smoking (25%).



17% say they smoke 'regularly' or 'occasionally'.

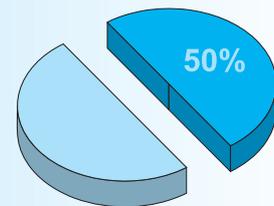


44% say that they have at least one person who regularly smokes at home; we do not know if they do so in the same room as the pupil.

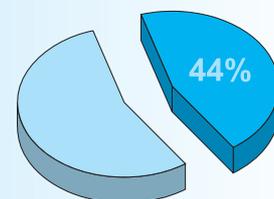


72% of all smokers would like to give up smoking.

50% of all pupils in the survey have a parent or sibling who smokes; 44% have a close friend who smokes.

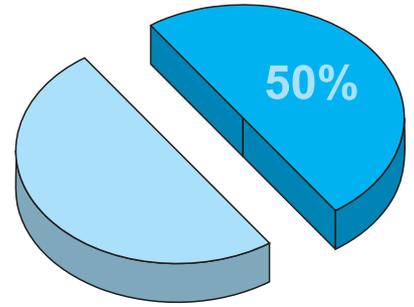


Research has shown that the best single predictor of young people's smoking is whether their best friend smokes: here 44% report that a close friend smokes.

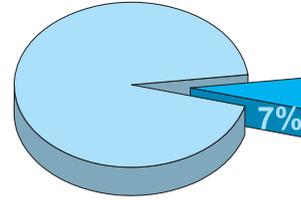


ALCOHOL

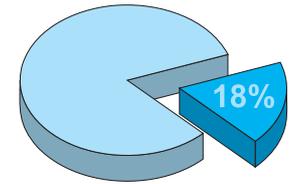
50% had at least one alcoholic drink in the week before the survey.



7% of pupils bought alcohol from an off-licence that should only sell to over-eighteens.



18% of drinkers drank over the advised weekly limit for adult females of 14 units.



Comments



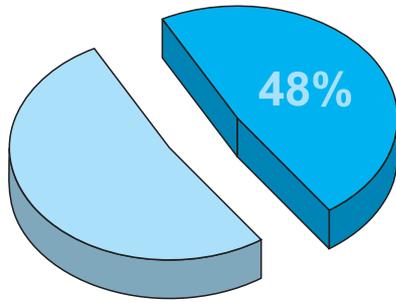
TOBACCO: Cigarette smoking kills more than 120,000 people in Britain every year. Smoking is highly addictive and many of those who take up smoking regularly carry on until the day they die even though they have tried to stop many times. Most smokers take up smoking in their school years. This places schools in the front line of the battle to reduce the massive toll of death and illness caused by this addiction.



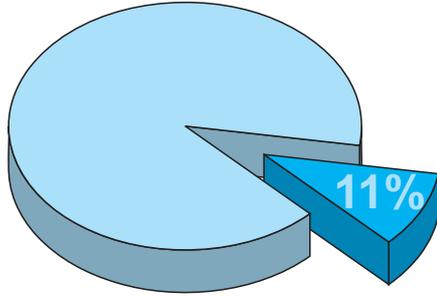
ALCOHOL: Children and young people make a very fast transition between drinking very little under adult supervision to drinking independently as adults by the time they are about 16. In recent years the amount they drink has doubled. Almost a third of 15- to 16-year-olds binge drink (drink more than five units in one session) and get drunk at least three times a month. This is higher than most other European countries.

DRUGS

- 48% reported they were 'fairly sure' or 'certain' that they knew someone who used drugs that were not medicines.



- 30% of pupils have been offered cannabis. 22% of pupils have been offered other drugs.

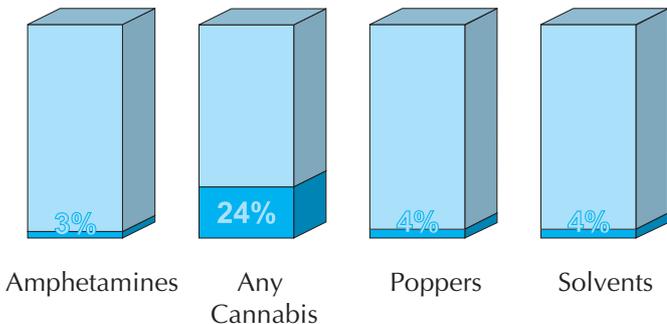


- 11% say they have taken some form of illegal drug within the last month.

- 3% of pupils said they have taken more than one type of illegal drug at the same time. 2% reported taking an illegal drug and alcohol on the same occasion.

- The three most commonly taken drugs were:

	Boys	Girls
Cannabis resin/leaf	19%	18%
Cannabis oil	4%	4%
Poppers	4%	4%



- Drugs are classified by law into three classes, which attract different sentences.

Class A drugs include: Heroin
Cocaine
Ecstasy
LSD

Class B Amphetamines (non-injection)
Barbiturates
Cannabis oil

Class C Cannabis leaf or resin
Mild amphetamines
Tranquillisers
Anabolic steroids

- Reports of using different classes of drugs.

	Never	Within last month	Within last year	More than a year ago	Ever
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Yr 8 males

Any Class A	96%	1%	1%	1%	3%
Any Class B	98%	1%	1%	0%	2%
Any Class C	90%	5%	3%	3%	11%

Yr 8 females

Any Class A	98%	1%	1%	0%	2%
Any Class B	98%	1%	0%	1%	2%
Any Class C	93%	3%	3%	1%	7%

Yr 10 males

Any Class A	90%	2%	5%	2%	9%
Any Class B	91%	3%	3%	2%	8%
Any Class C	71%	18%	8%	4%	30%

Yr 10 females

Any Class A	92%	3%	3%	1%	7%
Any Class B	95%	2%	2%	2%	6%
Any Class C	72%	13%	12%	4%	29%

All

Any Class A	94%	2%	3%	1%	6%
Any Class B	95%	2%	2%	1%	5%
Any Class C	80%	10%	7%	3%	20%

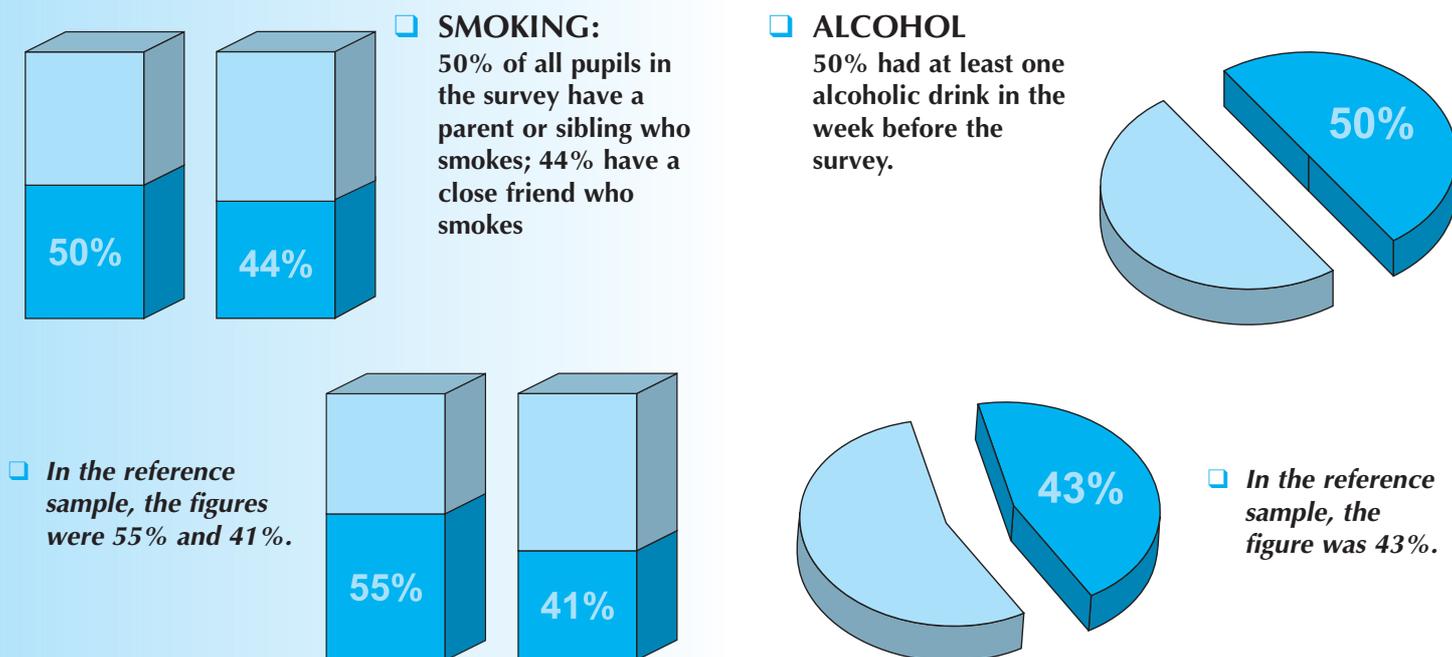
- Overall, 20% of pupils have ever taken a Class C drug. Figures for experimentation with Class A and Class B drugs are 6% and 5% respectively.
- 10% of pupils report using a class C drug in the last month.
- Older pupils are more likely to have used drugs, at all or recently.

Comments



Each drug carries its own *short and long term risks* whether legally or illegally produced, but the following are particular risk factors involved in using any illicitly manufactured drug: (1) Users can never be sure of exactly what they are taking, (2) Not knowing the strength of what has been bought could lead to an accidental overdose (which may be life-threatening) (3) Users can't be precisely sure of the effect the drug will have, even if they have taken it before.

Significant differences between Worcestershire pupils and a reference sample of schools across England and Wales



A summary for the six most common illegal drugs.

These drugs have been chosen because they are the six commonest in most surveys. The numbers in the following table(s) are percentages, with figures for the reference sample following in brackets. Figures for illegal drugs were very similar to those seen elsewhere

Comparison of headline statistics about drug use from Worcestershire with SHEU databank samples (in brackets).

Year 10	Know nothing about them		Believe safe if used properly		Have used in last month		Have used	
	Worcestershire	(Reference Sample)	Worcestershire	(Reference Sample)	Worcestershire	(Reference Sample)	Worcestershire	(Reference Sample)
Amphetamines	47%	(46%)	9%	(8%)	1%	(1%)	3%	(2%)
Cannabis resin/leaf	25%	(25%)	36%	(43%)	15%	(15%)	28%	(28%)
Cannabis oil	41%	(38%)	17%	(17%)	2%	(2%)	5%	(4%)
Ecstasy	29%	(24%)	5%	(6%)	1%	(1%)	2%	(3%)
Synthetic hallucinogens	32%	(31%)	6%	(6%)	0%	(0%)	2%	(1%)
Solvents	28%	(27%)	12%	(14%)	2%	(1%)	5%	(4%)

Comments



It seems that patterns of drug use in Worcestershire are quite similar to those seen in other parts of the country.



The work in Worcestershire about legal and illegal drugs use for young people includes:

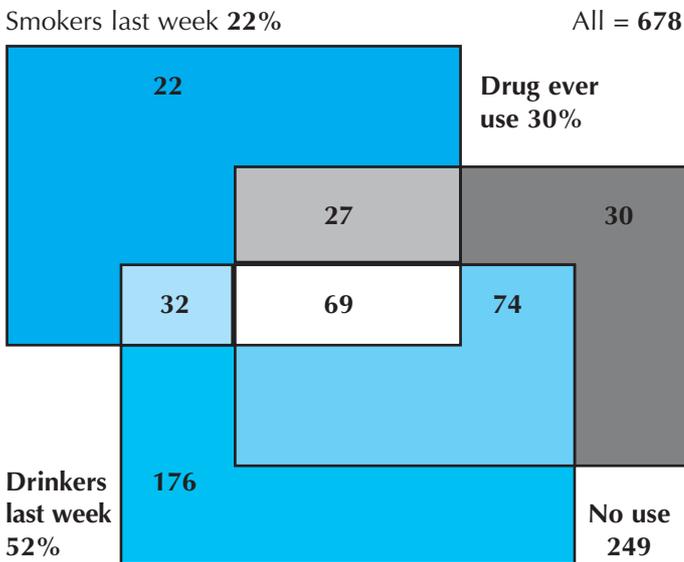
- PSHE Advisory service
- National Healthy School Scheme
- School Drug Advisors
- Services for young people who are drug or alcohol users

Links between smokers last week, drinkers last week and ever used drugs

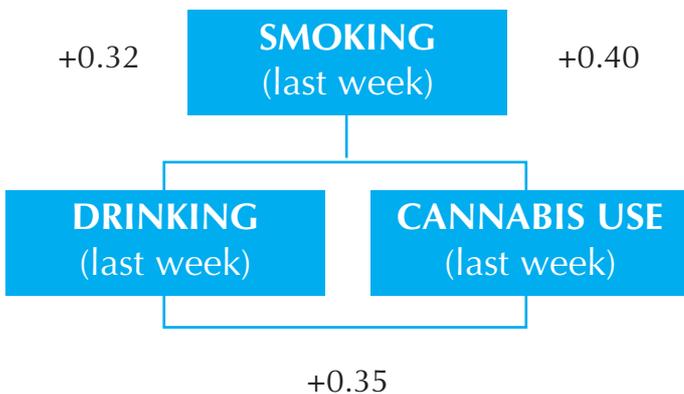
There were 678 Year 10 pupils in the survey.

- 22% of Year 10 pupils smoked last week
- 52% of Year 10 pupils drank last week, and
- 30% Year 10 pupils have ever tried illegal drugs.

By chance, then, we would expect 3.4% of the Year 10 pupils to fit all three categories – which would be just 23 of them. In fact, we find 69 Year 10 pupils fitting all three categories, which means that if you do one, you are more likely to fit the others. Of 149 smokers, only 21 neither drank last week nor ever tried other drugs.



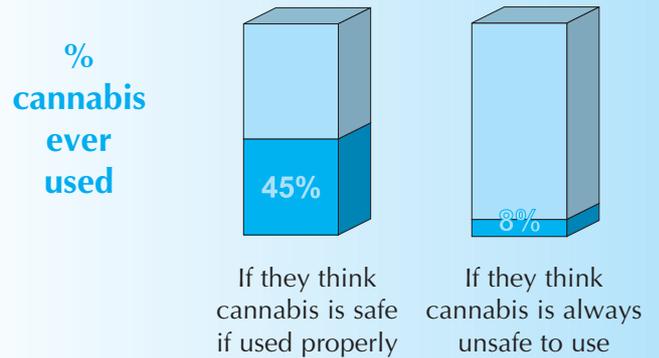
Another way of saying this is to say that the three behaviours are *correlated*. If these correlations are given a number between zero and one, the figures for Year 10 females are:



Cannabis attitudes and cannabis use

Attitudes and behaviours are linked. We ask young people about their beliefs about drugs and can show that this is related to what they have done.

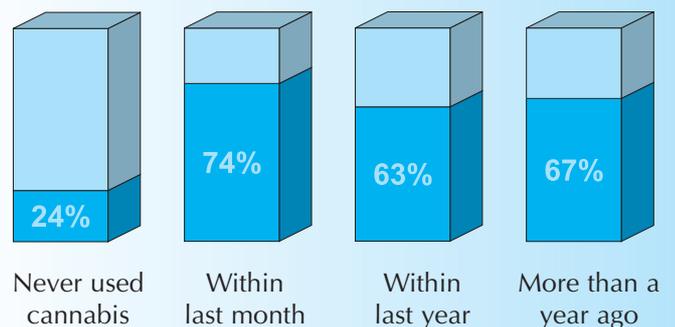
Cannabis use among young people in Year 10 with different beliefs about the drug



Constructing the table in this way suggests that people have an attitude that they base their behaviour on, but of course the reverse may be true: experience of the drug (and socialising with other drug users) may lead to a change in attitudes or beliefs.

Beliefs about cannabis among young people in Year 10 with different use of the drug

% who believe cannabis is safe if used properly



Comments

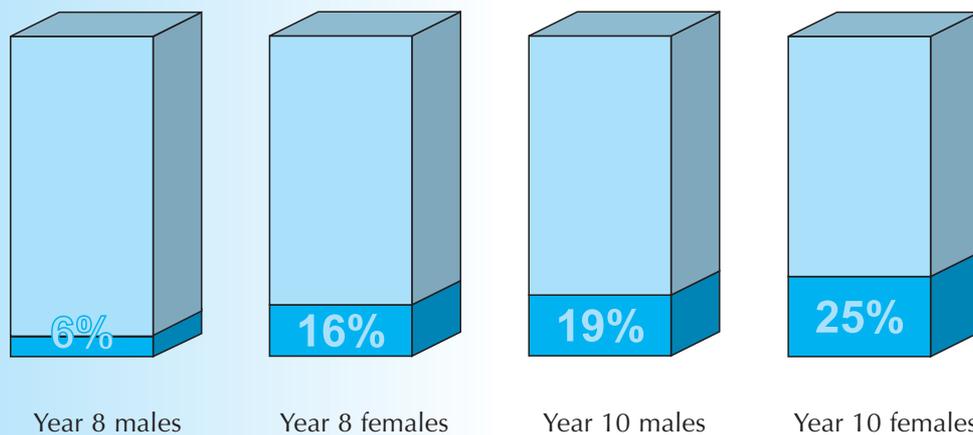


Smoking and drinking and drugs use all can be part of a young person's lifestyle and to some extent are linked. It is probably helpful to consider these different behaviours together.

Links between smoking, drinking and cannabis use with other aspects of young people's lifestyles

As part of the study, an analysis was made of smoking, drinking alcohol and experience of illegal drugs. The purpose was to find other aspects of young people's lifestyles that were linked with the target behaviours.

There are some very obvious links with age and gender, particularly in smoking:



Other aspects of lifestyle can be linked (correlated) with using tobacco, alcohol or other drugs:

SMOKING among year 10 females was linked with:

- lower self-esteem and less sense of control;
- greater levels of anxiety;
- more spending on socialising;
- fewer 'healthy' food choices;
- poorer engagement with school; and
- less involvement with sport

DRINKING in Year 10 females was linked with:

- higher self-esteem;
- greater anxiety;
- more spending on socialising;
- more drinking of 'diet' drinks;
- and more social activity

EXPERIENCE OF CANNABIS in Year 10 males was linked with:

- poorer satisfaction with life;
- greater levels of anxiety;
- more spending on social life;
- fewer 'healthy' food choices; and
- poorer engagement with school

Local Action: SPACE



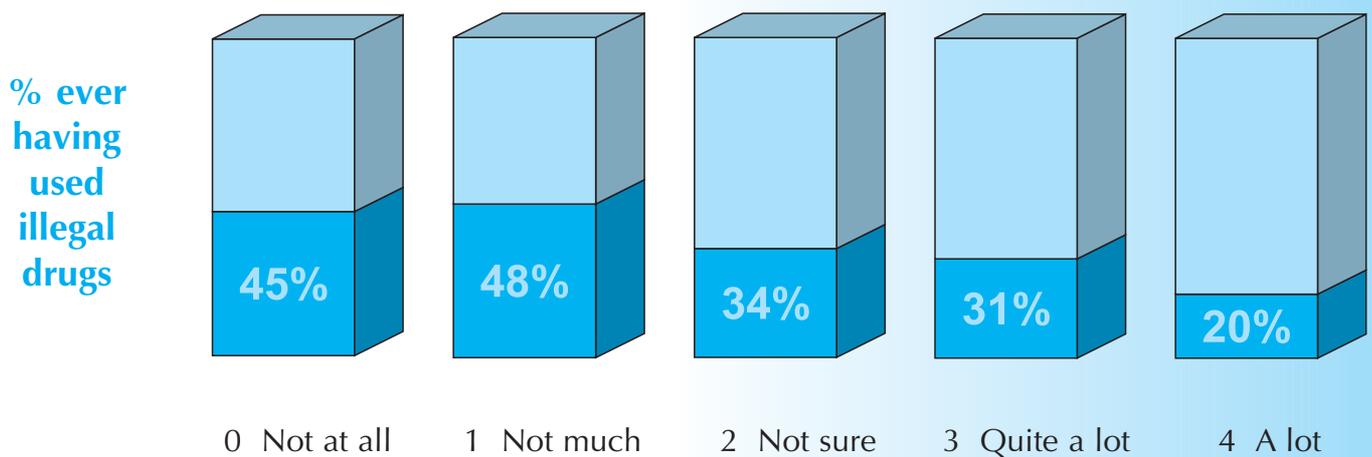
Worcestershire SMAT funds SPACE, a multi agency partnership that provides advice, information, education and prevention activities about drugs and alcohol as well as treatment for young people under 19 years of age. SPACE has a freephone helpline where young people can speak to a specially trained Substance Misuse Worker. SPACE offers one to one work, targeted education, detached Youth Workers and a Clinical Team to young people. Any referrals to the SMAT funded SPACE service are offered an appointment with a specialist Substance Misuse Worker within 5 working days, and an intervention within 10 working days. SPACE can be contacted on 0800 169 60 64.

This work is continuing to build up a clearer picture of the habits of young people and how use of tobacco, alcohol or illegal drugs fit in to the lifestyles of some individuals.

A picture emerges of cannabis use being found most commonly among males who have active social lives and who are not fully engaged with school; they are also more likely to be anxious about one of a number of issues (but not particularly concerned about healthy eating).

When we say 'linked', what does that look like? Let's take that statement that *experience of cannabis in year 10 males was linked with poorer satisfaction with life*.

30% of all pupils have ever tried illegal drugs. But this overall figure is different, depending on how satisfied the young people are with their life: the figures in the chart are from Year 10 pupils.



Satisfaction with life

What we can see from this chart is that if you are not at all satisfied with your life, you are more than twice as likely to have ever used drugs.

Comments



Just as it is not sensible to view drug use in isolation from the picture we see for smoking and drinking alcohol, it is also useful to see drug use in the context of the whole lifestyle of young people – how satisfied are they with their lives, how they are getting on at school, what sort of spending money they have, and so on. How drug use fits in to their lives is probably something only they can tell us.

Local Action: Hidden Harm



Worcestershire SMAT has contributed towards the funding and development of a Hidden Harm service called Inside Out that will provide a helpline, one to one and group work for young people who are affected by a carer or parent's substance misuse.

Local Action: Drama Workshops



Worcestershire SMAT has provided funding for the PSHE and Drugs Advisor to engage a theatre group, Re:Action, to provide drama workshops at 25 schools and PRUs. The workshops are set in the context of schools broader approach to PSHE and help facilitate learning with interactive drama sessions that encourage the pupils to challenge how the portrayed situation around drugs and alcohol could best be handled.

Local Action: Targeted Education



Worcestershire SMAT has funded a Targeted Education team that deliver between 1 and 8 sessions to groups of vulnerable young people. The Targeted Education Team reaches more than 3000 young people a year with programmes that offer a safe, confidential and open forum for young people to seek advice, challenge ideas about drugs and alcohol and learn more about the risks and staying safe. The Targeted Education team can be contacted on 0800 169 60 64.



Worcestershire SMAT funded Substance Misuse workers work closely with schools who have pupils facing fixed term exclusions for substance use or possession. They support and guide the school and offer interventions to the pupil involved. For support from the Substance Misuse workers please call 0800 169 60 64.

CREDITS

We are grateful to the teachers, schools, and young people for their time and contributions to this survey.

Our thanks go to the staff and pupils that took part

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**TACKLING
DRUGS
& ALCOHOL
CHANGING
LIVES
IN WORCESTERSHIRE**