

ru-ok? Briefing – May 2021

This month's briefing is written and compiled by Sarah Hesse, a student social worker who has been on placement with us for several months. We wish her well in her new, imminent, and – doubtless- successful new career.

Newsflash (health warnings and other news):

- **The UK's First Overdose Prevention Service** – discussion on the use of supervised drug consumption rooms and the barriers faced. <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2021/apr/30/uk-first-drug-consumption-van>
- **Any Amount of Alcohol Consumption Harmful to the Brain** – UK based research claims there is “no safe amount of alcohol consumption for the brain, with even “moderate” drinking adversely affecting nearly every part of it”. <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2021/may/18/any-amount-of-alcohol-consumption-harmful-to-the-brain-finds-study>
- **Number of Cigarettes Smoked in the UK ‘Drastically Increased’ During Lockdown** - a new UK study has found that people have been smoking more to cope with the stresses of lockdown. <https://metro.co.uk/2021/05/10/smoking-dramatically-increased-during-lockdown-14550598/>
- **What is ‘Only Fans’?** – information, advice and support for parents and carers around young people using the ‘Only Fans’ website. <https://www.internetmatters.org/hub/news-blogs/what-is-onlyfans-what-parents-need-to-know/>

Current Trends:

Alcohol

There have been anecdotal reports recently from professionals of an increase in use of alcohol use by young people, which could be linked to the lockdown restrictions being loosened. Although it is great to be able to meet in groups again, young people may need to be reminded of the importance of vigilance around Covid-19, alongside basic alcohol harm reduction advice. This is particularly relevant as many year 11 students will be finishing their academic year very soon, with months of free time ahead of them. To help facilitate conversations with young people on how to keep themselves safer when drinking alcohol, we find the ‘Risk Triangle’ useful:

You – e.g. have you eaten a decent meal before drinking? What is your mood? Will this impact your night?

Environment – e.g. are you going somewhere familiar? Will it be daytime or night-time? Will it be crowded or secluded? How will you get home?

Other People – e.g. are you going out with your friends? Or people you don't know? People you're comfortable to say 'no' to? How will you keep each other safe if someone drinks too much alcohol?

Children's Emergency Department and ru-ok? stats:

In April 2021, 12 patients aged 14 to 17 were reported to have attended A&E due to alcohol, cannabis, diazepam, and an unknown substance. Each was offered an appointment with ru-ok? for support and advice on how to stay safer in the future.

Theme of the Month:

Year 11s Leaving High School

For many year 11 students, it has been an uncertain and stressful time with the temporary measures for GCSEs and of course Covid-19. A long (hopefully hot!) summer lies ahead for these young people, made even better by the easing of government restrictions. It may be tempting for young people to let their hair down and potentially ‘over do it’ with substances this summer. Although we may wish that young people would avoid substances completely it is important that, should they choose to use, they understand how they can reduce any possible associated harms.

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Some general harm reduction tips for teenagers choosing to use substances include:

- Dose low and go slow. Try a little bit first and wait for the effects to kick in before taking any more.
- Plan ahead – make sure you have money and options to get home safely. Consider bringing a power bank with you so that your phone doesn't lose battery or hide an emergency £10 in your phone case for a taxi home.
- Always tell your parent / carer where you are going and who you are with.
- Think about your environment - if you know you're going to be intoxicated avoid areas such as busy roads cliff tops and bodies of water.
- Avoid mixing different substances together - this can cause dangerous, unintended, or unpredictable effects. For example, mixing cocaine and alcohol together creates a whole new drug in the system called cocaethylene. This combination of substances in your body interacting together significantly increases the risks of overdosing.
- Try to avoid sharing drinks, straws, bongs, cigarettes and so on.
- Make sure you're in a good, positive mood before taking substances. This is because many substances enhance your current mental state, so for example if you are sad before consuming alcohol, often drinking can make it worse.
- Call 999 and ask for an ambulance if you see the signs of an overdose which can include confusion, unconsciousness (won't wake with a shout or a shake), severe nausea and vomiting, fitting, severe anxiety or paranoia, difficulty breathing, snoring/raspy breathing, blue/pale tingeing of knees, hands and lips, slow or erratic pulse (heartbeat), pale, cold and clammy skin.
- If a friend has passed out drunk, don't leave them alone to sleep it off, nor try to sober them up with a cold shower or cup of coffee. The level of alcohol in a person's blood may rise for up to 40 minutes after their last drink. If you can wake them, sit them up, offer sips of water and keep them warm. If they won't wake up, call an ambulance and put them into the recovery position. This can help to prevent them from choking on their vomit.

The Recovery Position

Keep the Airway Clear



Stay with person. If you must leave them alone at any point, or if they are unconscious, put them in this position to keep airway clear and prevent choking.

From: <https://www.firstaidforfree.com/what-is-the-recovery-position-in-first-aid/>

If you have any concerns about a young person's drug or alcohol use, contact Brighton & Hove's U18s substance use and sexual health service (ru-ok? inc DASH) which provides confidential support, advice and guidance to young people, their families, carers, friends and professionals, alongside treatment programmes for young people identifying problems arising from substance use and/or sexual health. A duty worker is available weekdays from 2 pm – 5 pm (4:30 on Fridays)

ru-ok? details: ru-ok? is on Instagram, Twitter and Facebook sharing useful information around drugs, alcohol and sexual health. Please follow us. Contact us at ru-ok? Tel: 01273 293966 or 07795 336436 or email Luci.Hammond@brighton-hove.gov.uk or RUOKDB@brighton-hove.gov.uk.

We would love your feedback!