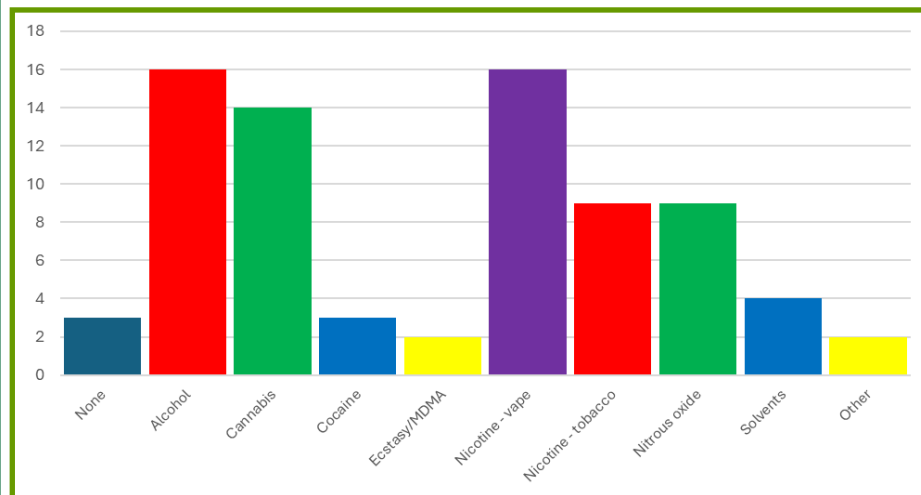


Youth worker survey report

At the National Youth Ministry Weekend in November 2023, we surveyed visitors to our stand. We asked them a series of questions relating to their work context and their experience of drug use amongst the young people they work with.

When asked, we found that nearly 90% of youth workers think that the young people they work with use drugs.

We also found that most drugs were suspected of being used, with alcohol and nicotine vapes being the most common closely followed by cannabis, then tobacco and nitrous oxide.



When asked if youth workers had discussed any drug-related issues with their young people in the last year, about two-thirds confirmed that they had. However, of those, less than half felt equipped to have the conversation. Of those who had not spoken to young people, again fewer than half prepared to have a conversation.

We also asked respondents if they had led any drug-related or life skill activities in the last year and about 75% had not done anything.

We also asked why no activities had been led and some of the responses included:

- Not having the resources/knowledge to feel comfortable leading an activity
- We have not covered that topic in our teaching programme
- I think it may be training and time to educate volunteers because lots have full time jobs and fit youth work in on the side
- Not thought about it enough
- Not been right opportunity
- We are not sure where to start
- Lack of resource, but we are trying to develop a programme
- Not equipped to do so
- Was not ready
- Lack of time, knowledge and competing priorities

Finally, we asked if the youth worker's church had a drug policy. Only around 20% were able to answer yes to this question. Whilst some churches may have one that the youth worker is unaware of, around 40% answered no.

Conclusions

This survey and report shows us that:

- Christian youth workers work with young people (they believe) use drugs
- Very few thought that none of their young people used drugs
- The drugs used by young people Christian youth workers work with are the same as the general population, i.e. alcohol, vaping, cannabis, tobacco and nitrous oxide
- Most youth workers feel under-prepared to have drug-related conversations
- Most youth workers are not including any drug prevention activities, or relevant life skills, in their programmes. Although some did identify that this was something they were working on
- Many churches do not have drug policies.

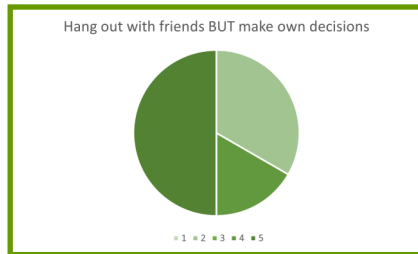
Drug Prevention—What Works?

Many people (especially those giving us money!) want to know if what we do works. As a small charity, we do not always have the resources to follow up on the children and young people we work with. We are able to do before and after evaluations of sessions and programmes, and also ask the people who invited us for feedback.

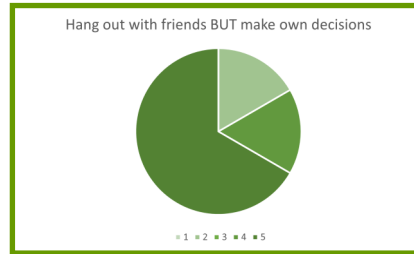
The following pie charts show the change in opinion after having attended a Hope UK session. Young people are asked to score themselves 1-5 (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree). Please note the colour gets darker for higher numbers):

I like hanging out with my friends, but I make my own decisions

Before:

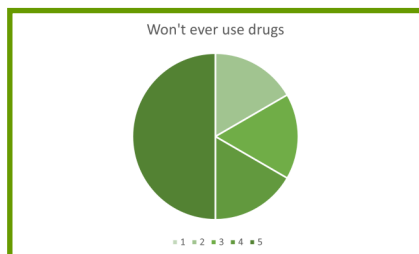


After:

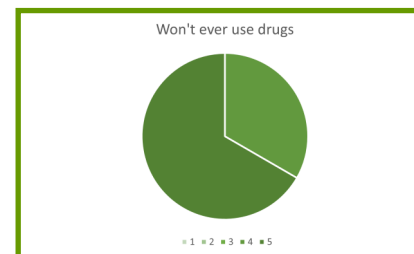


I don't think I will ever use illegal drugs

Before:



After:



We also always ensure that we work to internationally recognised good practice in drug prevention. For example, the International Standards on Drug Use Prevention (UNODC and WHO, 2018) include the following:

In general, an effective prevention system aims to:

- * 'Support children and youth throughout their development and particularly at critical transition periods where they are most vulnerable, e.g., infancy and early childhood, at the transition between childhood and adolescence.
- * Target the population at large (universal prevention), but also support groups (selective prevention) and individuals (indicated prevention) that are particularly at risk.
- * Address both individual and environmental factors of vulnerability and resilience.
- * Reach the population in multiple settings (e.g., families, schools, communities, the workplace).'

And 'healthy attitudes and social normative beliefs related to psychoactive substance use are also important protective factors against drug use. Good social skills, and resilient mental and emotional health remain key protective factors throughout adolescence.'

Effective actions:

- * 'Use interactive methods.
- * Are delivered through a series of structured sessions (typically 10–15 sessions), taking place once a week, often providing booster sessions over multiple years.
- * Are delivered by a trained facilitator (also including trained peers).
- * Provide an opportunity to practise and learn a wide array of personal and social skills, in particular, coping, decision-making and resistance skills, especially in relation to substance use.
- * Change perceptions of the risks associated with substance use, emphasizing the immediate consequences.
- * Dispel misconceptions regarding the normative nature and the expectations linked to substance use.'

While to a certain extent what we can do depends on the groups inviting us, all of our own programmes are designed to match the above criteria—particularly our Drugs, Life and You course. We like to focus on equipping children and young people with personal and social skills as much as possible.

In other newsletters this year we will report on longer-term studies with former Band of Hope members and Generation Hope young people.

Run, skip, jump!

Are you someone who likes to run marathons? Or maybe half marathons? Or go for a short walk?

We are looking for people who might want to challenge themselves this year, and raise money for a good cause (us!).

Whether it's the London Marathon, a Local Walk, a Bake Sale or an Evening of Music, Hope UK would love for you to include us in it. And we want to help you make it happen. That's why we've introduced the Hope UK Sponsorship Initiative.

This initiative means that Hope UK will reimburse 25% of sponsorship up to the cost of your event or entry fee. Hope UK will only reimburse:

- * If you have registered your event with us.
- * Once we have received all the sponsorship monies (we will only make one reimbursement so make sure you've collected all the money).
- * Online sponsorship must be done via Just Giving.
- * If we have proof of entry / receipts for room hire etc.

If you want to discuss this with us further, or have an idea you would like to suggest, please do contact Thuli via our e-mail enquiries@hopeuk.org.

Examples of what your money can pay for:

- * £5 is the cost of reaching one young person.
- * £10 will pay for a set of drug samples for us to use with adults (these will not be real drugs!).
- * £25 will pay for a Handbook with over 100 activities, for workers to use when planning sessions or informal work.



Accredited Training

This year we are looking for opportunities to deliver our two Open College Network accredited programmes:

- * Drugs, Young People and the Role of the Youth Worker
- * Drug Prevention and Interventions for Family Workers

Both programmes are delivered over two whole days or four half days. They are very practical, and participants not only gain knowledge and skills to help them with their practice, they also receive useful tools they can immediately use.

Learners can just attend, learn and leave with relevant resources, or they can then do some extra work to gain credit with the Open College Network, London Region—this is helpful for, for example, continuous professional development.

The trainers are all experienced drug educators, usually with either youth or family work backgrounds, and will make the course relevant to the group they are working with.

Feedback from previous programmes include:

'I had very little knowledge about drugs prior to training & now have lots of ideas to suggest implementing.'

'I really enjoyed the games; lots of discussion & games to keep you focused; plenty of interaction & opportunities to ask questions.'

'Interesting course – made you think; has made me look at drugs in a different way especially at school.'



Annual Meeting

We invite you to join us—either in person or via Zoom—at our Annual Meeting and Conference weekend.

Date: Saturday 13th April
Time: 09.30—10.30am

Location: All Nations Christian College, Ware, Hertfordshire

Our conference starts at 6.30pm on Friday 12th April, and ends at lunchtime Sunday 14th April—you are welcome to join us for just the AGM, or for more of the weekend.

Please do let us know if you plan to attend—members will be receiving a mailing outlining the business we expect to cover in the AGM, with an opportunity to nominate trustees and officers, as usual.

We look forward to seeing you there!



Online Workshops February to June 2024

Nitrous Oxide - An introduction for parents, youth workers and other adults

26th February, 7.30pm

Basic drug awareness for youth workers

12th March, 11.30am

Talking about drugs with your child - a guide for parents

22nd April, 7.30pm

Drugs and your community - practical ideas for a local church

22nd May, 12.00pm

Confidence and self-esteem - ways to help your youth group

18th June, 11.30am

All workshops are hosted on Zoom, last one hour and cost £10

To book, go to www.hopeuk.org/events

Stamps

Although most of us receive fewer letters these days, Hope UK can still make some money from stamps—so if you can collect your stamps and send them to us from time to time (at the Gold Street address below), we would be very grateful!

Talk to Angela if you would like to know more.



Is your information up to date?

We hope you enjoy hearing from Hope UK, about our work. However, we are aware that we may be contacting an organisation and the person we used to mail has moved on — or maybe you would prefer not to hear from us any more.

Please contact us at enquiries@hopeuk.org, or call us on 020 7928 0848, if you would prefer not to hear from us again.

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www.hopeuk.org

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