

Newsletter

February 2026

Hope
UK

*Equipping Young People to
make Drug-Free Choices*

Audio-Visual Evening

Although our celebrations for Year 170 theoretically ended last year, one event was carried into this year! (Mainly because we had arranged a date for last year that coincided with the Christmas Lights event in Kettering.)

As a very old educational charity, we have a wide variety of audio-visual education resources in our archive and wanted to show them off. So we invited the mayor, councillors, the High Sheriff, history societies and local churches to visit our offices and see what we have. We were delighted with the turnout, and had a lovely afternoon and evening showcasing our resources.

From Magic Lantern slides, through Kodak slides, film-strips, overhead projection, video, PowerPoint and DVD to online e-learning, and from illustrated books to drug samples (fake) via flannelgraph, posters and photos, we had them all. We even had tapes for a Sinclair ZX Spectrum 48k, and Betamax videocassettes! Dr John Lander launched his new book (see later) and Annemarie McAllister - our lovely historian - was on hand to correct Sarah!

We were very grateful for all the support from Kettering Civic Society, Mayor Ben Jameson and our High Sheriff Jeremy Sharman, and all our other friends. It was lovely to meet some of our funders too - thank you!



“Prevention is better than cure”

The Rise and Fall of the Band of Hope

Dr John Lander’s book “Prevention is better than Cure” – The Rise and Fall of the Band of Hope - has recently been published by Austin Macauley and was formally launched at the Hope UK office on 22 January. Over the past 20 years, John has written several books and papers in connection with temperance and teetotal movements, and his latest work provides a comprehensive picture of the formation, growth, achievements, and disappointments, of what became a highly influential organisation in the second half of the 19th century and the early years of the 20th.

Until now, recognition and acknowledgement of the valuable work undertaken by countless numbers of Band of Hope volunteers since 1847 had been neglected. From modest beginnings in Leeds in November 1847, there was a total focus on persuading children to avoid the many dangers resulting from alcohol. Despite facing, at times, intimidation, tens of thousands of Band of Hope leaders and supporters were prepared to put their “heads above the parapet” to convince young people and their parents of the need to refrain from all intoxicating drink.

The organisation grew throughout Britain and Ireland to reach, in 1913, a peak membership of over 3.7 million, spread among more than 33,000 societies. Membership decline began during the second decade of the 20th century, with the fall accelerating from the mid-1930s. In 1995, the organisation was reconstituted as Hope UK with a wider remit. The book is dedicated to past volunteers and to current staff and supporters who are continuing to bring the dangers of alcohol and other drugs to the notice of young people.

The 255-page book is available from John Lander at a price of £10.99, plus £2.40 postage, by contacting him at jandplander@btinternet.com



Recruiting

We are looking for a full-time fundraiser to join our team. Based in Kettering, the successful candidate will help raise funds for our vital work, and assist with raising the profile of Hope UK.

If you, or someone you know, would like to join us, you can find out more about the role at hopeuk.org/join-us (Closing date - 22nd February)

Children, violence and vulnerability 2025

Research from the Youth Endowment Fund

The Youth Endowment Fund surveyed nearly 11,000 children aged 13–17 in England and Wales to hear directly from them about their experiences of violence. They have been releasing the results in a series of reports - all of which are worth reading in full, and paint a disturbing picture.

They found that one in five (18%) had been a victim of violence, one in eight (13%) had carried out violence, and half (50%) had witnessed violence committed against someone else. (All in the last year). The violence included physical and sexual assault, robbery, and threats with weapons. 29% of victims required medical treatment from a doctor or in hospital.

Their report found that 'one in eight teenagers (12%) said that in the past 12 months they'd been asked to either sell drugs; transport drugs; or store drugs, weapons or money. Around a quarter of those who were approached to do one of these things went through with it — the equivalent of 120,000 13-17-year-olds in England and Wales.' Reasons for joining gangs varied, but bribery was the main tactic. Sadly, four in ten teens in gangs had joined by the age of 12 - demonstrating the importance of early preventative interventions. Involvement in, or proximity to, county lines - or child criminal exploitation - is clearly a challenge for many young people. Interestingly, this report, when discussing prevention, focusses on focused deterrence, a multi-agency strategy that identifies people involved in serious violence and helps them stop offending and stay safe. An earlier report acknowledged that 'support should not only respond when harm occurs but also reach children early to prevent it' and listed various effective methods. These included: Programmes that build trusted adult relationships — such as mentoring and sports programmes, cognitive behavioural and trauma-specific therapies, and social skills training (think of our Drugs, Life and You course).

Of course, all this comes at a huge cost for the children and young people involved - not just in terms of physical harm and criminal records, but also on their mental well-being. As you will probably already know, among young people generally more than one in four 13-17-year-olds report high or very high levels of mental health difficulties. But for young people committing serious violence, nearly two-thirds (62%) had also hurt themselves or considered suicide, compared with just 12% of those not involved in such violence. They were also three times more likely than teenage children not involved in such violence to have high levels of mental health difficulties, as measured by the SDQ (64% compared to 20%), and over four times more likely to have a diagnosed mental health or neurodevelopmental condition (81% compared to 19%).

'Many teenagers described how the fear of violence shapes their everyday lives. Almost one in five (19%) avoided places or events, while 15% changed how they travel — taking different routes, avoiding public transport or not travelling alone – to stay safe. A smaller but significant minority (3.1%) had taken extreme measures to protect themselves, such as carrying a weapon or joining a gang. In total, 39% of all teenage children reported concrete impacts of fears of violence.'

All quotes from the Youth Endowment Fund reports - which we consider to be vital reading for anyone working with young people.

Lifeskills Activity Six - Decision Making (2)

This activity can stand alone but works better when used together with the activity we outlined in our December 2025 newsletter (which you can find on our website).

Give each member of the group (or each of your own children/grandchildren) a sheet of paper - we often use one with the outline of a body.

Ask them to think about what their own values are - the things that are important to them, things they care about. This might be all kinds of values such as about caring for the planet, or wanting to have lots of friends, or believing that bullying is wrong, or that it is good to have lots of money! It absolutely doesn't matter what they put - it is all about them and what they consider matters. (They may need help getting started.)

Once everyone has thought about this you can ask them to share their ideas IF THEY WANT TO.

Then discuss with them how they feel if their values are challenged or affected by others - for example, if they think doing homework is important, but their friends don't like doing homework. What about if they think not bullying is important, but also want to be popular and their friends leave someone out?

Talk about how our values affect our decisions, and also how, if we make choices that go against our own values, it can make us feel bad about ourselves. (More next time...)

Online Courses

We continue to offer an opportunity for learning to those individuals and groups who may not be able to book an in-person, bespoke course. Book soon to attend:

- Understanding Cannabis - 26th February at 4pm
- Drugs and Mental Health - 17th March at 3.30pm
- Addictions - April 21st at 3.30pm
- Vaping - 20th May at 3.30pm
- Ketamine - 11th June at 4pm

To book a place, go to our website: hopeuk.org/events

Hope UK in 2026

It may only be February, but there has been a lot on since our last newsletter. Activities have included:

- JCS in Westminster, Islington, Harrow and Reigate (including in the RAF Museum in Hendon, which was exciting!)
- Our Audio-Visual Evening
- Detached work in a hospital (Scotland) and careers fair and colleges (Northamptonshire)
- First-time sessions for our three trainees - all of which went very well, and we look forward to their second sessions
- These new educators then attended and completed their last training weekend
- A session at a toddler group (we really can go anywhere!)
- Lessons at a variety of primary and secondary schools - in Swansea, Sheffield, Northamptonshire, and Hertfordshire
- Ongoing work with Action 4 Youth - an alternative provision organisation - where we lead workshops with small groups of young people who are not managing mainstream education
- A workshop with Beavers (youngest Scouts)
- Session with a youth group in Sheffield
- One-to-ones at a career fair in North London (including chatting to one young person worrying about friends in criminal gangs)
- A presentation at a church meeting in Kettering
- Staff and trustee get together where we finalised our plans for 2026
- Christmas lunch (!)



Around the UK

You may know that we have four project workers based in and working for local areas. Below is a brief update for each:



Andy Lawley - Sheffield Project Worker

Andy has been working in schools, youth groups and uniformed organisations in the last few months. He has funding to offer free lessons to schools in Sheffield, and would love to hear from interested primary and secondary schools. He is assisted by one volunteer, Tabi, and a local affiliated group.

Ian Michell - East Midlands Project Worker

Ian has worked with Hope UK for many years in a variety of roles. He is currently developing our work in the East Midlands, supporting his team of six volunteers and supported by the local, affiliated group. They have been busy working at Safety Zones and leading workshops in primary schools.



Subrina Jacobs-Peters - Northamptonshire Project Worker

Subrina is our newest project worker, based in our Kettering office. She has been extensively networking within Northants and is now leading workshops and sessions for job-seekers, young people in education, and much more.

Trish Best - South Wales Project Worker

Trish joined us just over a year ago and has been working to re-engage our small team of local volunteers. She (and her team) have begun to take lessons in a local school, and have been presenting to churches in the area.



Invitation to our AGM

Yes, it is that time of year again!

You are invited to join us at our Annual Conference and AGM.

Conference dates: April 10th (6pm) to 12th (1pm)

AGM: April 11th (at about 10am)

We will be at All Nations Christian College, Ware, Hertfordshire, and you are welcome to join us.

To book, e-mail enquiries@hopeuk.org.

Quiz Night

Once again we will be hosting our Annual Quiz Night in our Kettering office.

You are invited to join us!

Date: Wednesday 20th May

Time: 7pm - 9pm

To find out more and to book, go to hopeuk.org/events



Cannabis and its Derivatives

Cannabis (weed, marijuana, blow) is a psychoactive drug from the cannabis plant. Its active ingredient is THC (Tetrahydrocannabinol), which can make the user feel happy, giggly, sleepy, relaxed or chilled. Use can also cause tiredness and lethargy, confusion, anxiety and paranoia. It can affect the memory and motivation, meaning, for example, the user may perform badly in exams. It is an illegal drug in the UK - other than for medical use. As a class B drug, users risk up to 5 years in prison, an unlimited fine or both for possession, and up to 14 years in prison, an unlimited fine or both for production and supply.

Spice is a synthetic cannabinoid which attaches itself to the same receptors (parts of the brain!) as THC. It can be sprayed onto plant matter and smoked or (increasingly common) vaped. It can have similar effects to cannabis (at lower levels as it is more potent) and can cause nausea, vomiting, confusion, poor coordination, anxiety, and seizures.

Research undertaken by Bath University found that up to one in four vapes confiscated in secondary schools contained spice. This means that secondary schools are the second most likely place to find spice, after prisons. THC vapes can be bought online and through social media sites. As they are unregulated these THC vapes may contain a synthetic cannabinoid rather than THC, which come with their own risks.

Edibles are food and drink products containing THC (some may contain CBD, another - legal - compound found in cannabis). As they are absorbed into the blood stream via the digestive system they take longer to start working than smoking or vaping, which may lead the user to use more than if they were smoking. Side effects include: confusion, hallucinations, panic attacks, paranoia, intense psychotic effects, short-term impairments in cognition, memory, alertness, coordination, and balance. There is also a risk of overdose, which can lead to paranoia.



Long term use of cannabis can affect brain development, heart function and psychiatric well-being.

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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