

The London Youth Involvement Project

Sample Activities

Warm-Up Activities

Introduce your neighbour

Aim: to support a group of young people who don't know each other to start to learn a bit about each other

Explanation: ask each member of the group to talk to take it in turns to ask their neighbour the following questions:

- What is your name?
- How old are you?
- Where are you from?
- Why did you decide to get involved in the project?
- What's your favourite food?

Each member of the group then introduces their neighbour to everyone else.

Worry in a hat

Aim: to encourage young people to voice their concerns and to support one another.

Explanation: each member of the group writes down something that worries them about the session they are about to begin. They place their worries in a hat. The hat is passed round the group and everyone takes out a worry. Each member of the group reads out the worry and offers thoughts on how it can be overcome.

Spaghetti Towers

Aim: to encourage young people to work as a team and to have some fun

Explanation: divide the group into smaller teams and give each team a packet of spaghetti and a bag of large marshmallows. Explain to the group that the challenge is to build the tallest tower they can in ten minutes using only spaghetti and marshmallows

Two truths and a lie

Aim: to encourage the group to get to know one another

Explanation: Each member of the group is asked to share two truths about themselves and one lie. The rest of the group must decide which is which.

What's changed?

Aim: to encourage the group to look closely at details

Explanation: Ask the group to line up in two rows, facing one another. Label them row 1 and row 2. Tell them to look carefully at the person opposite them, taking in all the details of their appearance. Ask row 1 to turn around, so that their backs are now facing row 2. Each member of row 2 makes a small change to their appearance (for example, removing an earring; untying a shoelace). Tell row 1 to turn around and ask each person to say what their opposite number has changed about their appearance. Repeat the exercise so that row 1 makes changes and row 2 guesses what they are.

Effective drug prevention

Aim: to encourage young people to think through drug prevention and to negotiate with one another about what makes it effective.

Explanation: divide the group into pairs/threes. Give each pair/three an aspect of drug prevention and ask them to select four key words/phrases which will ensure it is effective. For example, if the aspect is drug education, the young people might decide that the four key words/phrases are regular, age-appropriate, interactive, fun. You can give each pair/three different aspects to look at or ask them to look at the same area. Ask for feedback.

True or False?

Aim: to challenge commonly held beliefs about drinking and drug use and to encourage discussion around these beliefs.

Explanation: present a series of statements to young people and ask them to stand up if they think it is true, or stay seated if they think it is false.

Example statements:

The NHS Smoking, Drinking and Drug Use Among Young People annual surveys and reports are a very useful resource for finding information on young people's experiences of and attitudes towards drinking and drug taking. <http://www.hscic.gov.uk/catalogue/PUB06921>

More young people drink alcohol regularly now than did 10 years ago

(FALSE: 50% fewer young people drink regularly in 2012 than did in 2002. Source: *Smoking, Drinking and Drug Use Among Young People in England, NHS 2012 (SDDU, 2012)*)

More young people use drugs now than did 10 years ago

(FALSE: over 40% fewer young people have ever used drugs in 2012 than did in 2002. Source: *SDDU 2012*)

A cold shower, hot coffee or fresh air can help to sober someone up

(FALSE: these may make someone feel more awake temporarily, but only time will sober someone up)

The Chief Medical Officer for Britain says that children should drink no alcohol at all before they are 15

(TRUE: while some people believe that supervised drinking of small amounts of alcohol in early teens can help to promote responsible drinking, the chief medical officer is clear that drinking any alcohol at all before 15 can be damaging to young people)

Most young people don't think it's ok to try drugs to find out what they are like

(TRUE: fewer than 10% of young people believe it is ok to try drugs to see what they are like. Source: *SDDU 2012*)

Agree/Disagree Activity

Reasons why young people take drugs or Alcohol

What you will need: a large room

Aim: This activity aims to get young people thinking about why their peers may use drugs or alcohol. It is a useful way to lead into discussion about what might help to prevent young people misusing drugs or alcohol.

Explanation: Ask the group to stand in the middle of the room. Explain to them that one end of the room is 'strongly agree' and the other end of the room is 'strongly disagree'. Read each of the reasons in turn and ask the group to arrange themselves according to how far they agree or disagree with each statement. For example, if a group member strongly agrees with a statement, they should position them self close to the 'strongly agree' end of the room. If they don't feel strongly either way, they should position themselves in the middle of the room, etc.

Ask members of the group to feedback the reason for selecting their position.

Example statements

Pressure from friends/acquaintances

Friends were doing it

To have fun/feel good

Curiosity – to see what it's like

Boredom

Because of stress

Because of being unhappy

Because it's too hard to say no

Because they are offered

Because they are addicted

Information Sources

Aim: to develop understanding on where information about drugs and alcohol comes from

What you will need: poster-sized pieces of paper; a variety of magazines, newspapers, fliers, etc; pens; scissors; glue

Explanation: Divide the team into smaller groups. Explain to them that they are to create a poster which details where young people get their information about drugs and alcohol using images and words from the magazines, newspapers, fliers, etc to help illustrate. Allow half an hour for this part of the activity.

Ask each small group to present their poster.

After all the posters have been shown, the team should be asked to respond to think about the following questions:

- What is the most influential source of information?
- What's good/bad about the different information sources identified?

Extension questions:

- Which information sources 'know' the most?
- Which information source has your interests at heart?
- Which do you trust?
- Does this change over time?
- Which is informed by facts?
- Which is informed by attitudes?
- Which information source gets it wrong about young people?
- Why does this matter?

Internal and External

What you will need: Roll of brown paper; different coloured marker pens

Aim: The exercise aims to get the group to think about the internal and external influences which can determine whether or not young people misuse drugs or alcohol. It can help young people to consider both the reasons behind drug and alcohol misuse and effective prevention.

Explanation: Divide the group into two teams. Give each team a long roll of paper and ask for a volunteer from each group to lie down on the paper. Ask another volunteer from each team to draw around them, giving an outline of a body. Explain to team 1 that their outline represents a young person who misuses drugs or alcohol. Using a coloured marker pen, they should write down INSIDE the outline of the body internal influences which may have led to the young person's substance misuse. These should include the thoughts, feelings and behaviours of an individual which may lead to them misusing drugs or alcohol, for example, lack of confidence, risk-taker. Using a different coloured pen, the team should write down OUTSIDE the outline of the body the external influences which may have led this young person to misuse drugs or alcohol, for example, peer pressure, lack of parental boundaries.

Ask the team 2 to do the same exercise for a young person who does not misuse drugs and alcohol.

Ask each team for feedback.

Ladder of risk

What you will need: Risk statement cards for each group

Aim: This activity encourages young people to consider what situations are most risky in terms of drugs and alcohol. It is useful in supporting young people to think of the range of risks which may accompany situations and to consider what strategies they might use to make the situations less risky.

Explanation: Divide the group into groups of four or five. Hand out risk statement cards to each group and ask them to rank them in order of risk – from the most risky situation to the least risky. Explain to the group that there are no right or wrong answers. Ask each small group to feed back their 'ladder' of risk and to give explanations for why they have chosen their order.

Risk statements

Drinking alcohol in the park with friends

Drinking alcohol alone in your room

Going to a house party

Hanging out with an older age group

Smoking cannabis in the park with friends

Skipping school

Going to a party with your parents or carers