

Drugs & Alcohol / Dual Diagnosis

This fact sheet will give some background information on the connection between the use of drugs and alcohol and mental health difficulties. This factsheet contains key information on where you can go to seek support from statutory and voluntary sector organisations in Harrow as well as national organisations.

What is dual diagnosis?

Dual Diagnosis is a term that refers to a mental health diagnosis co-existing with a substance misuse problem. There is debate among health professionals whether substance misuse can lead to increased symptoms for those with mental health problems. There is also evidence to suggest that use of illicit drugs among young adults can be a trigger for mental health difficulties.

Dual diagnosis is a common problem for both mental health services and drug and alcohol treatment services. It is suggested that 30 to 50 per cent of people with mental health problems also have current drug or alcohol issues. Nevertheless it is also clear that many people who use illicit drugs or alcohol do not have mental health problems.

Impact of drug/alcohol use on mental health

There are various different drug categories, which each have a different effect on the body and thus different implications for your mental health. Some substances have been shown to directly cause mental health problems; others can aggravate or exacerbate existing mental health problems. The table below shows the different drug groups and their effect on the body and mind.

Drug Group	Names of Drugs	Effect on Body	Effect on Mental Health
Stimulants:	E.g. cocaine, methamphetamine, amphetamine,	Increase energy and heart rate. Cause euphoria, dilated pupils, paranoia, anxiety, sexual arousal, sexual impotence and comedowns	Long term use of stimulants can result in feelings of hostility, paranoia, restlessness or distressing thoughts.
Opiates	E.g opium, heroin,	Calming effect on the body.	Opiates are very dangerous to the body system and pose a higher risk of overdose and death.
Empathogens :	E.g. ecstasy.	They target the body's stress response to induce feelings of connectedness, warmth, understanding, arousal and belonging.	Have the potential to be counterproductive, can cause mood swings and depression symptoms.
Psychedelics:	E.g. mescaline, LSD	Lead to heightened senses, may lead to visual or auditory hallucinations and an altered state of consciousness.	Can also cause anxiety and panic attacks.
Dissociatives:	E.g. ketamine	Euphoric, floaty, disconnected, relaxed, numb, scared or unable to move.	Create a sense of detachment – or dissociation – from the self and surroundings. Can lead to 'out of body' experiences
Cannabinoids :	E.g Tetrahydrocannabinolic Acid (THC) Psycho-active substance in cannabis	Cause you to feel calm, chilled out, floaty and sensual. Also cause paranoia, a dry mouth, sleepiness and feeling lazy	Increase the risks of developing schizophrenia and other psychosis. Also leads to distressing thoughts.
Depressants:	E.g Alcohol, Benzodiazapines,	Euphoric, confident, relaxed, risk taking,	Produce depression, chronic fatigue,

	Cannabis	vomiting, unconscious, coma and death.	breathing difficulties, sexual problems and sleep problems.
Opioids:	E.g Morphine, methadone, Buprenorphine, hydrocodone, oxycodone and Heroin	Confident, warm, safe, pain-free, invincible. Also cause constricted pupils, hallucinations, addiction, withdrawal, and overdose.	Using opioids can put people at a higher risk of depression, as it changes the reward and pleasure system in the brain.

Individuals may choose to use some of these above substances to amplify their mood or to induce a preferred mood. Whilst this can be pleasant at times, each substance has their own adverse side effects.

Cannabis use has been well documented to trigger episodes of psychosis. A high intake of alcohol can cause symptoms of psychosis, particularly hallucinations and paranoia. Long term alcohol use can also exacerbate existing symptoms of anxiety and depression. Benzodiazepines in the short term make you feel calmer but are also highly addictive, and can lead to moodiness and confused states. If they are already feeling low, paranoid or anxious, substances can make this worse, or they can lift mood in the short-term, followed by a low mood on withdrawal.

Individuals may choose to use substances or alcohol as a way to relieve unpleasant symptoms. This self-medication may be an attempt to relieve symptoms of distress or may help relieve the unpleasant effects of prescribed medication. As substance use continues, the user is likely to develop tolerance to the drug and will need to increase the dose gradually to achieve the same effect. Therefore substances only provide a temporary relief and are much more harmful (physically and mentally) in the long run when an individual becomes dependant on them. Mental health services do not support self-medication, and most agree that illicit drugs or alcohol worsen mental health problems.

Do psychiatric drugs and illicit drugs affect each other?

When two or more drugs are taken at the same time, they may interact with one another; one drug changing the effect of the other. One of them may become toxic, or its effects may be lost or increased. A person's age, weight, genetic make-up and general health will make a difference to the way the drugs impact. Taking street drugs increases the risk if the person is taking a prescription medicine, or if they already have health problems. It may interfere with treatment or make the illness worse.

What about withdrawal?

The effects of withdrawing from many illicit drugs can produce, or mimic, symptoms of mental ill health. Alcohol withdrawal can cause anxiety, insomnia, hallucinations (commonly visual), and clouded thinking.

Alcohol and benzodiazepines withdrawal are **extremely dangerous** if not monitored by a medical professional. Withdrawal can cause seizures which can often be fatal. If you are regularly drinking a large amount of alcohol and choose to stop, you **must not** do this suddenly and seek medical support and drug and alcohol support services.

Coming off stimulants often results in confusion, irritability and low mood. It sometimes can cause suicidal feelings. Withdrawing from opiates can cause unpleasant physical effects. Opiates can sometimes mask intense emotions, which may emerge once people stop taking them. Please also note that opiates can be accompanied by a high risk of overdose and can often lead to death by overdose. This is due to the potency of the drug which can be difficult to ensure the right amount required. It is strongly advised that if you are using opiates, you seek support from the drug and alcohol services to educate you about safe administration, clean needle exchange if necessary or to sustain you on safer medications.

What help is available?

When a person is assessed, professionals decide whether drug / alcohol abuse or mental ill health is the main problem, and direct them to the relevant specialist service. There can be differences of view on this as it is not always clear, but in Harrow the Drug and Alcohol Service and Community Mental Health Teams work closely together. You may be receiving support from both teams or you may only receive support from one team and have GP support depending on the severity of your situation.

Once assessed and eligible, Westminster Drug Project can support you to apply for detox and rehab services if required. All interventions, treatment and aftercare are free of charge. For further information, refer to the services list below.

Treatment approaches

Treatment approaches that may be beneficial towards recovery for dual diagnosis include; cognitive behavioural therapy, counselling and psychotherapy. Drug or alcohol intake can be linked to family or social problems or underlying emotional distress or unresolved trauma, therefore discussing with a trained therapist can help to explore and resolve some of these issues. For further information please read our '**Finding a Therapist or Counsellor**' Factsheet. Frequent, consistent, practical and regular contact with a named professional are most useful. Individuals in recovery for substance misuse sometimes find peer support groups helpful that work within a therapeutic framework e.g Alcohol Anonymous (AA) and the 12 step programme.

Local Statutory Services

Accident and Emergency

(Northwick Park Hospital) Watford Road, Harrow HA1 3UJ.

Tel: 020 8854 3232

For emergency medical support for drug and alcohol misuse – overdose, withdrawal or physical injury.

Westminster Drugs Project - Harrow (WDP)

44 Bessborough Road, Harrow, HA1 3DJ

Tel: 0300 303 2858 Email: harrow@wdp.org.uk

Web: www.wdp.org.uk/find-us/london/harrow-0

Specialist free service providing support for those experiencing a range of drug & alcohol difficulties including allocating key workers, counselling, alcohol reduction management, needle exchange, providing scripts, access to detox, rehab and support/social groups.

Compass Harrow

The 21 Building, 21 Pinner Road, Harrow, HA1 4ES

Tel: 020 8851 2787 or 07850438473

Email: adminharrow@compass-uk.org

Web: <http://www.compass-uk.org/compass-harrow>

Specialist service for children and young people with alcohol & substance misuse problems up to the age of 24 years old.

Local Voluntary Organisations

Alcoholics Anonymous Support

Tel: 0207 4070700 National Helpline: 0800 9177 650

Email: help@aamail.org

Web: www.alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk

Support groups to provide support and practical guidance on managing alcohol use on a day to day basis. Please phone or visit the website for all current venues and times for the meetings in Harrow.

EACH (Counselling & Support)

2 Rutland Road, Harrow, HA1 4JW

Tel: 0208 427 5188

Email: harrowfs@eachcounselling.org.uk

Web: www.eachcounselling.org.uk/harrowv

Counselling, employment support and wellbeing groups for adults programme for adults experiencing past or present substance misuse, domestic violence and mental health difficulties.

Private Sector Services

Cygnnet Hospital

London Road, Harrow-on-the-Hill, Middlesex HA1 3JL

Tel: 020 8955 7000

email: alexanderlawrence@cygnethealth.co.uk

Web: www.cygnethealth.co.uk

A private clinic and inpatient services to assess, diagnose and provide treatment to a wide range of psychological and emotional problems, including addictions. Accepts self-referrals, for prices please contact directly.

National Organisations

DrugWise

Web: <https://www.drugwise.org.uk>

Publishes a wide range of factsheets on drugs and their effects.

Release

61 Mansell Street, London, E1 8AN

tel. 020 7324 2989

email: ask@release.org.uk

web: www.release.org.uk

Confidential and non-judgemental information and support for drug users, families, friends and professionals. The telephone help & advice line is open from 11am—1pm & 2pm—4pm Monday to Friday. A message service is available 24 hours and we will return your call within one business day.

FRANK

Tel. 0300 123 6600 SMS: 82111

Email: frank@talktofrank.com

Web: www.talktofrank.com

Information about drugs and their effects, what to do in an emergency and signs and symptoms to look out for.

DrinkAware

Finsbury Circus (Salisbury House), 3rd Floor (Room 519), London, EC2M 5QQ

Tel: 020 7766 9900

Email: contact@drinkaware.co.uk

Web: <https://www.drinkaware.co.uk/>

Contains information about the effects of heavy drinking, calculating your unit intake and advice on how to reduce your drinking.

Further Information

Mind -Recreational Drugs and Alcohol Factsheet

http://www.mind.org.uk/help/diagnoses_and_conditions/psychological_effects_of_street_drugs

National Mind's factsheet contains further information on the psychological effects of street drugs, how these effect your mental health and suggestions for where to find support.

Support & Wellbeing Information Service Harrow (SWiSH)

SWiSH is for anyone in Harrow aged 18 years and over – those looking for help for themselves as well as carers and staff in local organisations. It can offer information or advice about a wide range of local services, including

where to keep fit and well, manage finances, join social groups, look for work, start a course, access help with housing or welfare benefits or apply for a personal budget. You can call the SWiSH helpline on 020 8426 0929, Mon-Fri, 9.30am-5pm.



This factsheet was produced by Mind in Harrow

Mind in Harrow, First Floor, 132-134 College Road, Harrow, HA1 1BQ

T: 020 8426 0929 | E: info@mindinharrow.org.uk | W: www.mindinharrow.org.uk

Registered charity number 1067480