

“Weed it Out...”

Cannabis is by far the most used recreational drug in particular amongst those aged 14-18 years of age. Often referred to as the ‘gateway drug’ Cannabis appears in several forms but the two most popular types in regular use amongst our teens are:



Cannabis ‘Resin’ or often referred to as ‘**Hash**’ or other local terms could apply. This particular form of Cannabis is very easily accessible for teenagers to get hold of, and for a small amount about the size of your thumb nail (street name for this deal is a ‘teenth’ see images left) which refers to 1/16th of an ounce costs as little as £6-8.. (pocket money stuff)... The two main active ingredients in Cannabis are (1) Tetrahydrocannabinol THC and (2) Cannabidiol (CBD)

How do they use this..??



Generally users would heat up the resin (as in picture left) this then causes the ‘resin’ to become brittle. Once in the brittle state it can easily be rubbed to produce small pieces of resin that can then be added to tobacco in a roll up to form a ‘joint’. It can also be ‘grated’ direct into a roll up. Resin does not have a distinct smell in its raw form but you would be able to detect a ‘burning’ smell as users prepare the resin for using in a joint. One of the main tell-tale signs of somebody using resin is to look for ‘small burn holes’ in shirts, blouses, on ties etc...this is due to small bits of the resin falling out of the joint as they smoke it. All Cannabis burns

at a higher heat than tobacco and in particular Resin.

The other most popular form of Cannabis is ‘**Skunk**’. This is the most potent form and the one that contains the highest levels of the active ingredient known as ‘THC’



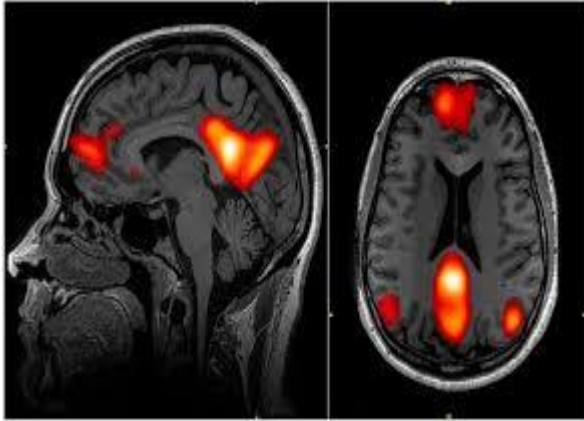
(Tetrahydrocannabinol).

Although the argument still rages about the dangers associated with Cannabis use – I think it is now widely accepted that regular use of Cannabis in particular ‘Skunk’ (because of the high levels of THC found in this form) increases the risk of depression (particularly in the younger age group 11-15 year olds) right through to developing other mental health illnesses such as psychosis and schizophrenia. ‘Skunk’ has a really strong ‘sweet pungent smell’ which if you are familiar with makes this particular form of drug quite easy to detect. Users are well aware of the

‘distinct smell’ it gives off and will use many methods to try and mask this. Some of those methods are fairly basic for example, use of aftershave, deodorants or perfume.

How does Cannabis affect us...??

Some of you may have watched the recent channel 4 'live trial on Cannabis' this was very informative in particular to explaining the impact of the two types of Cannabis currently being used ie: Skunk and Hash.



What the trail clearly showed was the impact of 'Skunk' on the brain in particular the 'Salience network' (pictured left)/ The Salience network is responsible for our motivation, it allows us to prioritise tasks and such like. Use of Cannabis Skunk severely disrupts this network because of the high levels of THC, whereas HASH (less THC and more CBD) didn't have the same impact. There are numerous video links from the programme which can be accessed online by searching Channel 4

Cannabis Live trial. **A good resource for student education on Cannabis.**

There are many other short term and long term effects from the use of Cannabis all of which are very much dependent on the type of Cannabis being used (ie: Skunk, Hash), method of use (smoking, digestions etc) age, quantities and frequency of use being some of the key ones.

How much does 'Skunk' cost to buy on the streets..?



The small amount pictured (left) cost £10 but general street purchases can range for £10-£60. Drugs is a 'business' and Cannabis forms a very large part of that market. Those who cultivate Cannabis are making huge amounts of money and all 43 police forces have stated that the growth in the Cannabis market has reached unprecedented levels mainly due to the very large scale 'Cannabis farms' which are popping up everywhere in the UK.

What sort of paraphernalia should we be looking for...?



Most dealers now use the small sealable button bags (pictured left). These can often have various motifs printed on them. If you are finding these type of bags on your site then this would be a very 'strong indicator' (but not conclusive) that drugs are being used, in particular Cannabis. The bags can also be used for other drugs such as Cocaine, Ecstasy, Legal Highs.

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The image below shows a 'small plastic container' found in a student's rucksack. This is typical Cannabis paraphernalia you could find. How many of these items do you recognise or indeed have come across...



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There are many other types of paraphernalia that you can link direct to cannabis use for example:



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Grinders – These come in all shapes and sizes and are extremely popular pieces of paraphernalia for those using Cannabis. It tends to be something users like to show off amongst their friends and some see them as 'status type symbols'

No offence to have in your possession, and very easy to get hold of, car boot sale, market stalls, head shops, on-line etc..



Prices can range from £4-30. In order to effectively keep a lid on students bringing this sort of paraphernalia on site it is essential that all Schools/Colleges have a clear and precise entry within their own policies about 'drugs paraphernalia' as well as informing the students of what is expected of them whilst on site. Having this clearly stated will avoid any confusion as to what is permitted and what is not, and allow staff to legally seize/recover these items without challenges from students, parents or anybody else for that matter.



The very nature of these items (size etc..) generally means students are going to conceal these from view. The tall blue bong (featured in the picture on the left), **was found by staff hidden inside the trunk of a ‘tree’ situated at the bottom of their ‘sports field’...!!** Bongs come in all shapes, colours and sizes. From a tin can that can be adapted right through to acrylic and glass bongs all of which are legal to possess and very easy to get hold of. Costs can vary from £10 for the small acrylic bongs (pictured far left of picture) to handmade glass bongs costing thousands..

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How are the students getting the Cannabis into School/College..??

If the climate at your school or college is such that students feel confident enough to carry the Cannabis on their person ..., and many do, they will just blatantly bring it in. If this sort of climate exists and there is no fear of being detected or caught due to the fact it is not being recognised or challenged then you are in a fairly **‘dangerous place’** as far as the drugs misuse escalating. It only takes one or two to get the ball rolling and trust me this can escalate very quickly to the extent you have students openly dealing drugs on site. Having said that, students like many of us do understand that ‘possession or supplying drugs’ is a criminal offence and will try and mask this type of activity as best they can. One such **method is to ‘stash’ their drugs.**



Recognise these items (left)...

Q. Which one of these is a ‘stash’ container...??

A. All of them..!!

There are literally hundreds of very ingenious ‘stash’ containers advertised online as ‘stash cans/containers) ranging from £2- £40. Very current at the moment for teenagers to have as a **‘must have item’**...They are hundreds to choose from, soft drinks, deodorants, shaving foam, bean cans, de-icers, etc..etc..and all very

much like the real thing. If you have a student whom you have a strong belief is involved with drugs ...either possession or supplying, and despite having searched them and their property in the past you have found nothing **then look again...!!**

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Particularly at these types of covert ‘stash containers’. They generally twist from the top, bottom or from the middle to reveal a hidden chamber.

So if everything is telling you that there is for example ‘Cannabis present’ ...ie: Smell, the behaviour of the student, physical signs and symptoms of use (covered later in this handout)...then take a second look at these type of items.(see next page)



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A useful tip – because of the prevalence of these types of stash containers, you may wish to ensure that this type of paraphernalia is covered off in your own policies with a specific entry along the lines of:

‘Any paraphernalia (including stash jars/containers) or similar items that could be linked to the use of drugs (possession/supply) are also classed as specific banned items..’ This will give you the power to seize them.

What physical signs and symptoms should we be looking for in respect of Cannabis use...?

There are some very common features to be looking for in respect of a person under the influence of Cannabis. One of the major telltale signs is ‘pupil size’.



If we look at image (1) above you can see normal sized pupil, whereas picture (2) shows the size a pupil will enlarge to once Cannabis is in their system. A general guide line for Cannabis to kick in and pupil size to enlarge is about five minutes and the pupil will stay in this state for approx 1 hour after they have last used Cannabis. Picture (3) shows a term known as ‘red eyed syndrome’ and this is particularly indicative of heavy prolonged use of Cannabis ‘Skunk’ which contains high levels of THC. Often seen when students return to school on a Monday or from a school holiday. You will note pupil size has returned to normal (this is probably due to the fact he has not used cannabis for at least one hour or so), but the red lines are clearly visible due to the prolonged use of Cannabis (possibly over the weekend) prior to returning to School/College. Care must be taken when making an assessment purely on this one feature, as it could be something genuine such as, hay fever, conjunctivitis etc..

Other signs to look for are:

- Drowsiness
- Giggly, unexplained bouts of laughter
- Unable to maintain levels of concentration
- Rapid drop off in academic skills
- Sudden bouts of depression
- Changes in personality
- Munchies (a strong desire to eat something sweet - due to sugar levels dropping)

The above list is not exhaustive however these can be typical signs and symptoms due to Cannabis use.

To put this into context, not all young people use drugs including Cannabis, however we do know that Cannabis can no longer be referred to as a 'soft drug' and it is in everybody's interest that we identify as early as possible those that may be dabbling in order that we can provide the help and support they may need. There is nothing written down in the 'book of life' that states young people or anybody else for that matter must use drugs...it's a life style choice and providing realistic education, without preaching but delivered in a manner which allows those individuals to make these difficult decisions is the key to resolving this.

Drugs are not going to go away, the arguments will continue to rage about legalisation of drugs in particular Cannabis however as teaching staff or indeed parents all we can do is provide advice, good education and hope that our sons, daughters are able to make sensible informed decisions as and when these drugs are doing the rounds.

Do you provide any Drug Awareness Training for Schools and Colleges..?

There are a number of options for you to consider:



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Staff Training:

The most popular Course by far is our **Drug Awareness Level One Course**. A certificated course that covers everything you need to know, providing staff with the knowledge, skills are more importantly confidence to identify and resolve drugs misuse. All staff will receive Course Certification, Handouts and other related literature for them to takeaway. A wide range of drugs and associated paraphernalia will be on display allowing staff an opportunity to get hands on and familiarise themselves with.

Can be delivered for up to 24 staff (normally your key staff) at times that best suit but generally over a full day ie: 09.30am-3.30pm .

This particular Course is extremely popular and Schools/Colleges who often book this well in advance to avoid disappointment of non-availability.

If larger groups of staff require some form of training there is an option to deliver a twilight session (upto 2 hours) as a general update on popular drugs doing the rounds including the introduction to the Legal High market.



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Also very popular are the **student insets and parent evenings** which work extremely well on the back of each other. These can be delivered to whole year groups or smaller sizes across your working day and normally 50-75mins in duration. I have pushed for the Parents evenings as they are vital to the whole success of this education programme, and although I appreciate how difficult it can be to get parents to turn out – those that do will be very appreciative and feel much more reassured about the drugs education and support you are providing for their children.

Do you provide any other training other than Drug Awareness..??

Training can also be provided in the following areas:

- Conflict Resolution (non physical intervention) (half day)
- Drug testing (oral fluid) – a much more accurate test for detecting the presence of drugs in the body than urine. (full day)
- Searching/Seizure and Continuity of evidence techniques (half day)

If you're looking for that special staff training day that ticks all the boxes, provides hands on experience and practical advice and much more importantly the confidence for your staff to identify and resolves drugs misuse – then please don't hesitate to contact me direct.

I hope the information provided in this handout will be of some help to you all.

Kind Regards

Dave

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