

SORTED

Drug and Alcohol Service

SORTED is Northumberland's substance misuse service for young people.



September 2026

 **Message from Craig Newbigin-Team Manager**

Welcome back! I hope all school staff have had an enjoyable summer break.

As pupils return, it is a useful time to be professionally curious about any changes in their behaviour, presentation or wellbeing. Our workers sometimes see young people whose substance use has started or increased during the six week break, when routines, friendships and levels of supervision may have changed.

Changes in mood, attendance, engagement, tiredness or friendship groups do not necessarily mean that a young person is using substances, but they may provide an opportunity to gently explore how their summer has been and whether anything has changed.

A calm, curious and non judgemental conversation can help a young person feel safe enough to share what is happening. If you identify any concerns about substance use, or would like advice on starting the conversation, the Sorted team is always available to offer guidance and support.

Thanks again for your all of your work in supporting young people into our service, it's always appreciated.

Highlights & Updates

This last academic year we have had great continued support from all schools in Northumberland. 25% of our referrals have come from schools, both mainstream and alternative provisions

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The young people accessing support are primarily focusing around all forms of cannabis, alcohol and nicotine use. We have also seen an increase in young people wanting support around their ketamine use.

Our average age of young people accessing the service is 15. We believe that this is due to a mixture of us promoting the service to young people and also younger people starting using substances at an earlier age.

If you want to discuss any possible referral please don't hesitate to link in with any team member.

Trends -Smoking and Vaping

As you all know we have now had our Stop Smoking and Vaping offer for over 2 years. Statistics are showing that cigarette smoking is reducing significantly, prevalence of adults in the North East smoking has gone from 21.3% in 2011 to 10.2% in 2024. From the same research it shows that the rate of smoking in the youngest adults (16-24) is unchanged between 2023 and 2024 (8.2%), but has more than halved since 2019 (18.3%).

We are interested to know what you are seeing within your students in relation to smoking prevalence, please could you complete the attached online form so we can feedback to PHE on what schools are experiencing

[Smoking prevalence – Fill in form](#)



Upcoming Training

Our staff training and group work offer continues to be popular across a lot of schools.

We can be flexible in what this can look like so if you have any queries or are interested how we could support your school, please don't hesitate to contact Helena Swarbrook (email below)



Spotlight:

Sorted have shared with a lot of schools the work that WEDINOS does. WEDINOS runs a drug checking service across the UK. In their most recent Annual Report, covering April 2025 to March 2026, found 36.6% of community samples where the intended purchase was known did not contain the expected drug.

Rick Lines, head of programme for substance misuse at Public Health Wales, said: "Our work at WEDINOS over the past year demonstrates again the continuing volatility of illicit drug markets, and the high level of substitutions within the market that may increase the risk of ill effects and accidental overdose.

The report also identified widespread substitution in illicit products sold as THC, CBD or cannabinoid vapes. Some 43% of those submitted for testing contained synthetic cannabinoid receptor agonists, known as SCRAs and sometimes referred to as Spice. Public Health Wales warned that SCRAs used in vapes can cause rapid and severe effects including anxiety, panic, psychosis, hallucinations and seizures.

Resources & Support

**Scan to make a
referral**



**Please remember to gain
consent from the young
person, parental consent
is not essential**

**Contact us: sorted@northumberland.gov.uk
01670 536 400**

Resources:

Sorted padlet:

<https://padlet.com/sorted1/sorted-drug-resources-g6yoi1jvgnee31ek>

Previous Newsletters:

<https://northumberlandeducation.co.uk/sorted/>

Email Helena.swarbrook@northumberland.gov.uk for Substance
Awareness Training or group work