

FACT SHEET

Alcohol & Drug Issues

Alcohol and other drug use can shift from occasional use to a pattern that feels hard to control. If a substance is starting to drive choices, relationships, health, or safety, it may be time to look more closely at what is happening.



clear, practical, supportive

WHAT IT CAN LOOK LIKE

- Using more often, in larger amounts, or for longer than intended
- Difficulty cutting back even when you want to
- Using to cope with stress, sleep, emotions, or social discomfort
- Hiding use, needing it to relax, or feeling preoccupied by it
- Regret, conflict, memory gaps, financial strain, or risk-taking after use

WHAT CAN CONTRIBUTE

- Stress, trauma, low mood, anxiety, grief, or isolation
- Social environments where heavy use is normalised
- Using substances as a quick way to switch off or feel relief
- Physical dependence, withdrawal, or tolerance
- Shame making it harder to speak openly and ask for help

Why it matters

- Substance use problems often affect sleep, concentration, work, health, and relationships.
- The short-term relief can come with long-term costs that build quietly over time.
- People often notice the impact around them before they feel ready to name it themselves.
- Recovery usually starts with honesty, support, and a safer next step, not with perfection.

Helpful reminders

- Needing help is not weakness or failure.
- You do not have to wait until things are “bad enough” to seek support.
- Support for families and supporters matters too, not only for the person using substances.

PRACTICAL STRATEGIES

Choose the ideas that feel realistic for you. Small consistent changes usually work better than trying to change everything at once.

- Get clear on the pattern. Notice what you are using, how often, in what situations, and what you are hoping it will do for you.
- Reduce easy access where possible. Create distance between yourself and the people, places, or routines that make use more likely.
- Tell one safe person the truth. Shame tends to lose power when it is spoken aloud to someone supportive.
- Build coping alternatives for the times you usually use: walking, calling someone, eating, showering, distraction, or structured activities.
- Make safety the priority. Avoid mixing substances, driving after use, or using when emotions are escalating.
- Seek professional guidance early if there is withdrawal, dependence, overdose risk, or you are finding it hard to stop alone.
- If you are supporting someone else, set clear boundaries and look after your own wellbeing too.
- Recovery usually works best with structure, accountability, and support rather than willpower alone.
- Track what makes the problem better or worse. A short note in your phone or diary can reveal patterns you can actually use.
- Aim for steady progress, not perfection. Review what helped this week and keep the plan realistic enough to repeat.



TRY THIS TODAY

Start with one small, achievable step.

- Write down the top three situations that increase your risk of using.
- Choose one safer alternative for the time you are most likely to drink or use.
- Book one support step: GP appointment, counselling session, or a conversation with someone you trust.

WHEN TO GET EXTRA SUPPORT

- Use is becoming harder to control or is causing harm.
- Withdrawal, blackouts, overdoses, or unsafe situations are happening.
- Family, friends, or work are being affected by the pattern.
- You want confidential support for yourself or someone you care about.