

Stage: **Senior**

Lesson: **Drug use, What's the Harm?**

Resources Required for Lesson:

Flip chart paper, pens, A4 card, access to the internet for group research, 'Most Harmful' & 'Least Harmful' cards

Main Activities:

Begin by reminding young people of the definition of drugs and write up:

'Drugs are substances which change the way people feel, think or behave'

Next, divide the young people into small groups.

- Ask the young people to mind map on flip chart paper potential harms associated with drug use. [Prompt, if necessary: physical, mental, social, personal (career, travel, crime), family, community, society, and environmental harms. Short, medium, long term.]
- Ask groups to feedback their discussions and mind map to the whole group.
- Did any group have unique answers?

Where there any potential harms other groups hadn't considered?

Next, we will consider drugs on a continuum of potential harm.

- Divide into 2s/3s and give each group a drug to research for a few minutes. To research, young people could access the H-SAT / Know the Score / Crew / Talk to Frank websites.
- Drugs should include illicit drugs: cannabis, ecstasy, LSD, amphetamine, cocaine, heroin. And legal substances: alcohol, tobacco, solvents, caffeine, paracetamol.
- Young people should mind map their findings about the particular substance on flip chart paper.
- Next, on an A4 piece of card, write the name / draw a picture of the substance and two key facts about it to help inform its position on the continuum.
- Display 'Most Harmful' & 'Least Harmful' cards, and explain to the group that they are going to place different drugs on a continuum / scale.

It is important to highlight there are no right or wrong answers, but they must work together to eventually have all the drug cards placed in the order they think they could go, depending on harm.

Cards can either be stuck to the wall, placed on the floor, or young people could hold them up at front – this makes it easier to shuffle them around as the line builds up.

If required to prompt discussion, ask the young people to consider:

- How many people the substance kills every year?
- Would this substance cause death after one use?
- Do they feel the substance is classified correctly (legal or illegal, if so, class A, B, C, or Psychoactive Substance)?
- Would changing the classification change the potential for harm?
- Are current laws doing what they intend to?
- How do we actually know what is in illegal drugs? [We don't know the content, which makes making informed choices difficult].

Ask the young people if there are any surprises in their continuum?

End with a random round of 'The main thing I learnt from this activity was...'