

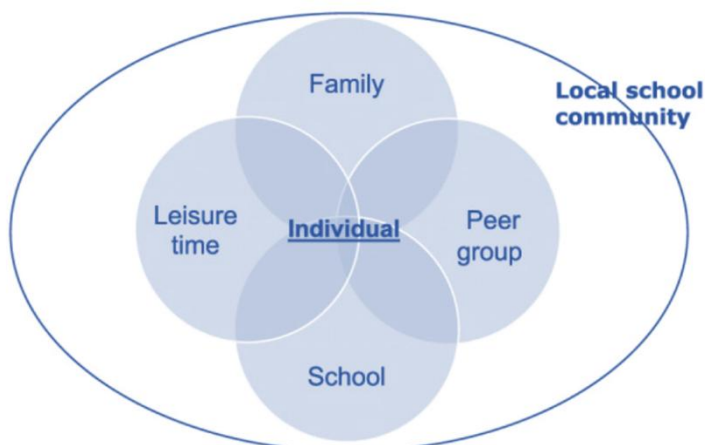
## School and Community Approach

### Preventing and Reducing Substance Use among Young People in Highland

**Working Together** - When prevention work starts early, we can avoid short term reactions and prevent substance use issues arising or becoming more entrenched. If substance use occurs in the community, there is often motivation to address the issues. These positive intentions can help make changes for the better. It is worth ensuring this effort is effectively harnessed by focusing on what we know works. When schools, families, leisure providers and local organisations work together to increase protective factors and focus on long term solutions, change is possible.

#### Protective Factors



There are **4 key spheres** of a young person's life where strengthening 'protective factors' can help to prevent or reduce substance use. These spheres are; **Family, Peer Group, School and Leisure Time**. When protective factors are put in-place or strengthened we know from the evidence-base that there is a decreased risk of substance use.



**Family** – Whilst it is recognised that family relationships can be difficult for some young people, they are supportive for the vast majority. Increasing quality family time and strengthening links within families is a key protective factor. This could involve encouraging families to spend more time together and providing community events which are accessible for whole families. Schools can also support families to spend more time together. For example, they could encourage parents to get involved in parent councils or engage with the school's social media. Spending time together and participating in activities as a family can improve communication and relationships. Having fun as a family often helps to make positive memories.

When parents talk to their children about alcohol, tobacco and drugs, it can be a difficult conversation. The Parent's Guide is available to help have those conversations. It offers practical advice on how to tackle issues that may arise and how parents can help their children to protect themselves when faced with peer and societal pressure. Sharing and using this resource can be a great first step to increase family involvement. There are other resources for parents and carers on the Highland Substance Awareness Toolkit (H-SAT).

#### 6 Top tips from the Parent's Guide:

1.  Build a close relationship
2.  Set boundaries and stick to them
3.  Know what they're doing, encourage hobbies and interests
4.  Don't give alcohol, tobacco and/or other drugs to under 18s
5.  If you drink or smoke, set a good example - take lower-risk approaches
6.  Talk openly & honestly about the risks of alcohol, tobacco and other drugs

**Peer Group** – Increasing the number of positive interactions with peers and decreasing the number of negative interactions is a protective factor. Positive interactions with peers include taking part in organised sport or hobbies with friends or attending the local youth club. It's beneficial when parents or carers get to know their children's friends, and their families. Know where they are, who they're with and what they're doing is a protective factor. The toolkit also provides [young people](#) with reputable information about alcohol, tobacco and other drugs.

**School** – Schools are community hubs and appropriate for discussions around substance use. Parent councils and local groups and community partnerships play an important role in preventing substance use, they can act as a forum for parents and community members to discuss local substance use problems and how best to work together to take effective action. Encouraging parents to talk to one another about substance use concerns can often result in collective agreement on what action they can take to strengthen protective factors. Communication between schools, local community partnerships and other key local partners e.g. NHS, Highlife Highland, Youth Action Team, Police, Third Sector, is vital for successful prevention. Further support in implementing this approach is available from the Health Development Officer (contact details below).

Schools have a key role in providing education on substance awareness. High quality, evidence based [lesson plans](#) are available at the [Highland Substance Awareness Toolkit](#). There are many different resources available:

- [What works summary](#). Alternatively this [short e-learning](#) considers the content in an interactive way.
- [Prevention and Education Framework](#) (which the lesson plans complement)
- [Prevention and Intervention Model](#)
- [Substance Aware School Award](#) (Prizes up to £1000 available)
- Discussing Drugs and Alcohol with Young People training for staff is available
- [School policy](#) (see policy section)
- [Substance Use Awareness Event Planning Guide](#)

**Leisure Time** - Improving the quality, range and accessibility of leisure time activities is a protective factor. Increasing the amount of time young people are engaging with positive structured activities in the community reduces substance use. Schools can provide after school clubs and sports sessions. While communities can develop more activities plus youth clubs, youth cafes and safe spaces for young people to be. Increasing these activities and ensuring they are accessible to all, including those most at risk, is a practical step all schools and communities can take. When working with young people it is important to ensure that their needs match the intervention, therefore consulting with young people about what they want in their community is vital. Ensuring the provision of a broad and diverse range of structured activities in local communities will allow for young people to have more time with positive role models, which is a protective factor.

Youth projects, clubs and other activities can also have an alcohol, tobacco, and drugs policy. Having an effective policy which actively promotes healthy behaviour is important for the health and wellbeing of the young people your group works with.

**Vulnerable Young People** - Whilst the universal prevention approach described above will benefit all young people, those at higher risk of problems associated with substance use may also benefit from more individualised and intensive support. The [Youth Action Service](#) is a multiagency service that provides support to young people that have substance use issues and their families. Referrals can be made to directly:

- The North (Caithness and Sutherland): 01955 605792
- The Mid (Mid and East Ross) phone: 01349 855502 or 01349 868700
- The South (Inverness Badenoch and Strathspey) phone: 01463 256603

**Preventing Overdose** - The Highland Overdose Prevention and Engagement (HOPE) app is a source of information for people with drug and or alcohol problems, as well as their families or friends, which helps prevent overdose and encourages engagement with services that can help. The HOPE app is free to download, and is available from [Android](#) and [Apple](#).