





GETTING  
STARTED

The group members told us about how they started using drugs/alcohol, when they started and in many cases how experimentation led to problematic use.

“start off dabbling and need more and more”

“dabble and then in 3 days you can be hooked”

“initially terrifying to inject”

“have a bit and then feelings go away - then need a bit to make everything normal”



THE  
HOLD

‘The hold’ describes the experience and feelings linked to being dependent on a drug. The group members described how it felt to feel physically addicted as well as some of the effects that ‘the hold’ can have on the mind and body.

“end up physically dependent”

“won’t sleep for 2-3 months”

“bang on it”

“wake up and the first thing in my head is to get more”



THE  
BUZZ

‘The buzz’ describes the experience of taking particular drugs, the thing that they sought by taking a drug or drinking.

“the rush - there’s nothing like it”

“you never have the same buzz as the first but you’re always chasing it”

“total euphoria - everything in life as good as it could be”

“heroin is the best buzz but it ruins your life more completely”



When the group members talked about 'The Desire' they were referring to the need for an individual to make the decision for themselves to get clean.

"It worked because I decided I wanted to give it up"



'The scene' refers to the environment in which individuals live, work, take drugs, drink, as well as their general circumstances and how they impact on their drug taking behaviour. Homelessness was a considerable issue in both Bognor Regis and Crawley.

"being on the street makes you take the harder stuff just to get sleep"

"homelessness is a big thing"

"would fight each other for it. Others wouldn't get you into it, not peer pressure"



'The fix' is the actual substance used by an individual i.e. drug or alcohol

"get the fix"

"cannabis"

"amphetamines"

"vodka"

"ecstasy"

"heroin"

"cocaine"

"cider"



FAMILY  
AND  
FRIENDS

The groups repeatedly referred to their friends and family throughout the discussion, in relation to getting into drugs, getting into, through and out of treatment and in relation to their drug taking behaviour.

“dealer is your best mate”

“friends introduce you to it”

“a circle of people you can’t get away from”

“to meet other drug users”



MAKING  
A PLAN

Day to day management of substance use can be troublesome. The group members repeatedly told us about a variety of coping strategies that they had employed to deal with a variety of issues, most of which simply rested on knowing their own boundaries. The groups called this ‘Making a Plan’.

“finding my level”

“you need an effective network”

“I wouldn’t use hard drugs, my body couldn’t cope”



BREAKING  
THE  
ROUTINE

‘Breaking the Routine’ refers to the processes needed for someone to decide to stop using drugs or alcohol and how someone might get clean.

“ultimately faith that life will get better”

“learned what I need to give up at AA”

“got to find own way”

**'Getting Clean' refers to not using substances.**



**GETTING  
CLEAN**

**“get off it - need support”**

**“got it into my head and lasted a year”**

**'Treatment' primarily focussed on the group member's experiences of existing services. Unsurprisingly, this received a large amount of attention and feedback.**



**TREATMENT**

**“need to have someone who knows from experience - sympathy”**

**“delay of 6-7 months”**

**“need to learn coping strategies and ways to change your life”**

**“it was so hard to get the script that I did it myself”**

**“fear factor - its like dropping my best friend, my better self, confident and better on drugs and drink”**

**“no incentive to be honest” “white knuckling it in prison” “nothing to stop me relapsing”**

**“leave you on highest dose of methadone until something goes wrong”**

**'No Light' referred to the end point for many, when the experiences and lifestyles had reached the lowest point and there seemed little hope. Many in the groups described this as the point at which people might seek help, be forced to seek help, or die.**



**NO LIGHT**

**“rock bottom”**

**“Death”**

**“helplessness”**



**BEING LABELLED**

Many members of the groups felt they were judged negatively in a variety of circumstances ranging from family, to doctors and strangers on the street.

“getting judged by everyone, especially GPs”

“GP says pull yourself together”

“the way people judge you makes you want to do it more”

“services are biased and stereotyping - you have to be completely clean”

“GPs and system turns you away early on”



**THE BALANCING ACT**

The groups often described how they coped day to day while using. This included getting more to pay for the drug, hiding it from friends and family, reducing the potential harm. They called this ‘the balancing act’.

“did it behind wife’s back”

“break into bin to get to the old needles”

“buying from the street - no idea how pure” “like Russian roulette, try to use the same people”

“I’ve come off heroin 3 or 4 times”

“grafting to pay for habit”

“kamikaze style crime - just run into the shop and grab something”



**THE ESCAPE**

The groups used ‘escape’ as a way of describing the feeling they sought and felt by using substances.

“take drugs to escape”

“puff to chill out”

“heroin is a vaccine for pain and misery”



**'The baggage' was used to describe past experiences that may have had an influence on their using behaviours.**

**"marriage breakdown, crisis in life. You want to kill yourself"**

**"the past and reasons for it are just an excuse"**

**"childhood - crap upbringing"**

**"abused as a kid but not using that as an excuse"**



**The groups were asked to think about where they would like to be in 5 years, where they saw themselves and all the factors that would impact on their future.**

**"shame it's illegal because actually I'd continue using"**

**"locked up"**

**"getting clean"**

**"addictive personality"**

**"dead - I've lost 10 people to heroin under 30yrs"**

**"I don't project into the future"**

**"get it sorted, get a life - very rare. Need someone who isn't into it"**



**'The downer' was used to describe the negative aspects of drug use, not only the feelings experienced when the drugs wore off but also the associated feelings and experiences.**

**"downward spiral"**

**"strong for a while but then you get drawn back in"**

**"swap heroin for another addiction"**

**"overdose, near death, resuscitated"**

**"needle fixation"**

**"scabs from blunt works"**