

1. Background

Cannabis is a hallucinogenic drug. It may also be called weed, hash, bud, dank, green, dust and pot. Cannabis can be taken in a variety of ways; smoked mixed with tobacco in a cigarette or bong, mixed into edibles or vaped.

The strength of cannabis on the market has increased significantly over the past 20 years. It is a Class B drug and illegal to have for personal use, to give away or to sell.

The effects of cannabis can vary widely, some people feel relaxed, happy, and giggly, others feel paranoid, anxious or confused.



2. Local Context

The age demographic of children using drugs in Northamptonshire is decreasing and the prevalence of cannabis is on the rise.

Cannabis is a county lines commodity and may act as an introduction into further drugs use.

There are increasing numbers of children using cannabis and other substances at levels that impact on their daily lives and functioning. Young people may use cannabis to 'self medicate' to help manage anxiety or distress or the effects of conditions such as unmedicated ADHD.



3. Why should we be concerned?

It is important that cannabis use by children is not minimised by parents/carers or professionals.

Cannabis use in adolescence is associated with increased depression, conduct problems and health risk behaviours and greater risk of both immediate and longterm adverse outcomes.

Watch : [Cannabis and the teenage brain](#)



4. Links with Exploitation

Most of the cannabis used by young people is supplied via large-scale criminal enterprises who use violence and intimidation to protect themselves from competitors and from law enforcement. The biggest risk for our young people is criminal exploitation through the activity of drug gangs, and serious physical harm and even death from gang associated violence.

Young people might initially be offered drugs "for free" and then asked to return the favour by carrying packages or small scale supply. These young people may be at risk of coercion into more serious criminal activity, or physical retaliation



5. What should we consider?

- how is a young person funding their cannabis use?
- are they attending school, engaging with learning, and making expected progress?
- Are there any issues or concerns in relation to family circumstances?
- Are there any concerns about their mental health or emotional wellbeing?
- Are there any other indicators of exploitation?
- What intelligence do we have around gang activity and drug dealing in the locality?



7. Where can I get further information?

It is important that professionals understand and are up to date with information about drug use.

Referrals and advice/training for professionals:

Ngage: [Northamptonshires Young People's Service | Supporting Young People \(aquarius.org.uk\)](#)

Information about edibles <https://bit.ly/3u75MVB>

[Cannabis | Weed | Effects of Cannabis | FRANK \(talktofrank.com\)](#)



6. How should we respond?

- Actively seek to engage with young people and develop and maintain trusted relationships
- Encourage the young person to engage with substance misuse services such as Ngage
- Provide information and education to parents/carers
- Address other risks and vulnerabilities, including exploitation risk
- Share information with appropriate partners
- Make appropriate referrals in line with Thresholds & Pathways