People Profiles

(User Personas)

Ajeet

I am exposed to drinking from an early age



About me

Ajeet, 8

- I live with my mum and dad and two younger sisters.
- We live in Basford, and I go to Primary School there.
- I love playing football.
- I am from Nottingham, but my grandparents came to the UK from India. My parents can speak English well, but my grandparents still struggle.
- I have noticed that there is a lot of drinking in Sikh gatherings, and I am especially worried about my dad.

My story

In my community there are a lot of family gatherings and celebrations, which are really fun. But I am noticing more and more that people are drinking a lot of alcohol in these events .

I am especially worried about my dad, who I see is drinking a lot. Sometimes he stays out later than us and he comes back stumbling and making a lot of noise, which wakes me up if I am sleeping. Last weekend he also missed my football game because he was still in bed after drinking the night before, which made me sad.

Recently, a few of my uncles have been encouraging me to try their drinks in these gatherings. They say things like “it’s just a taste, he is old enough”. They sometimes dip their finger into their drink and then into my mouth to give me a taste. I don’t like it, but I am starting to get used to.

Barriers

- Young and doesn’t know where to access support
- Alcohol forced upon him
- Peer pressure from members of family
- Situation has been normalised for him - getting used to things
- Likely to keep silent to avoid shame
- Wants to protect family and culture
- Not sure if parents would accept help
- “What will happen if I tell?”

Solutions

- Community education
- Cultural awareness
- Not making assumptions
- Recognising demographics
- Engage the family
- Safeguarding
- Enable him to use his voice, not just speak with family
- After school clubs
- Counseling, mentoring and workshops from outside services
- Utilising digital intervention

Mo

I am starting to use and sell drugs



About me

Mo, 15

- I live with my mum, dad and baby brother.
- We live in St Anns, and I go to secondary school there.
- I love Hip hop/Rap
- My mum and dad came to the UK from Pakistan, and are very religious Muslims. I try to keep my lifestyle from them because I know they wouldn't approve.

My story

I tried weed for the first time when I was 13. Smoking weed seemed like a cool thing to do for me because my favourite musicians talk about weed a lot, and it is glamorised in a lot of the TV shows and films I have seen. Also, a lot of people in my class had already tried it and were doing it after school, so I didn't want to be left out.

I now smoke weed regularly, and I like it. I feel like it gives me a lot of freedom from my strict family. It is easy for me to keep my lifestyle from my parents because a couple of joints are easy to hide, and my parents don't know how to spot the signs when someone is using drugs.

Recently, I have started running a few errands for my dealer to make a bit of money. There are some trainers and clothes that I really want, and so I have been thinking about whether I should start selling drugs myself at my school. But my current dealer is part of a gang, and I am worried about selling in their 'territory'.

I am not sure what to do. I have not been doing well in school and I don't think the teachers like me. I don't feel like there is any staff in school who I could trust to talk about this with.

Barriers

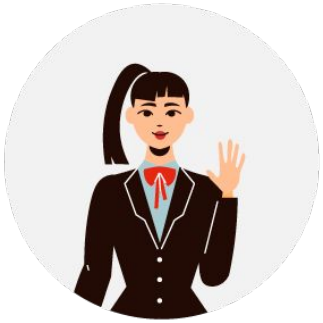
- Pressure from media
- Peer pressure
- Drugs normalised and glamorised for him
- Strict family wouldn't approve if they found out - intergenerational gap
- Religious/cultural conflict
- Poverty and deprivation
- Desire for a more expensive lifestyle
- Lack of trust of those in authority
- Doesn't see himself as a victim

Solutions

- Build trust
- Better pastoral support systems
- Educate the parents via the Mosque
- Involvement with Baby People (hip hop school)

Natalie

Dealing with the world of drugs at University



About me

Natalie, 18

- I am a first year undergraduate, living in student halls in Nottingham (Norton Court, Radford).
- I am not from Nottingham - I have come here to study Business at Nottingham Trent University.
- I was born in the UK, but my mum and dad are from China
- My parents are strict and have high expectations of me.
- I am LGBTQ+, and I have kept this from my family because I don't think they would approve.
- I hadn't tried any drugs before coming to University.

My story

This is my first time living away from home, and I am enjoying the freedom from my strict parents. I had been drunk before coming to University, but I was initially shocked at many of my new friends in halls and on my course were taking drugs, and during freshers week I tried Nitrous Oxide for the first time.

As a lesbian, I started to meet other LGBTQ+ people, who would go out and party together a lot and take party drugs, like MDMA, Ketamine and LSD. I was initially reluctant to try anything other than Nitrous Oxide, but I didn't want to seem boring to my new friends and community so I started to cave in. Whenever I am asked to go out I just can't say not. Because of these late nights, I am missing a lot of classes, and my grades are slipping. I am now using cocaine and ecstasy to stay up, and taking sleeping pills to help me go to sleep because I feel anxious in bed.

I would like to have a bit more control over my drug taking, but I don't know who to turn to. I feel like I can't tell my parents because they wouldn't approve of my lifestyle, my new friends and my slipping grades. I am worried about telling the university and their support services because I am unsure whether they will expel me, and whether they will share this information about me with other people, like my parents. I am also skeptical if they will understand me - from experience, people don't understand Chinese culture, and often confuse it with culture in places like Japan and Singapore.

Barriers

- Low trust in, and knowledge of, services
- Expects zero tolerance (from Uni and home)
- Cultural shame
- Others have high expectations of her
- Peer/ community pressure
- Lack of drug awareness
- Already stuck in a cycle
- Afraid of others finding out / lack of confidentiality

Solutions

- 18-25 year old services
- Gender/sexuality responsive services
- Better education about welfare services
- Student-targeted awareness campaigns
- Raised awareness in services around cultural differences

Damian

Economic migrant with alcohol addiction



About me

Damian, 38

- I am from Poland and I have been living in the UK for 6 years.
- I have come to Nottingham as an economic migrant, and I am sending money back to my wife and young son.
- I have worked in a variety of jobs since coming here.
- I now work in sales, in a busy office.
- I live in a small flat, by myself, in Hyson Green.

My story

I have come to Nottingham to make as much money as possible to send back to my family back in Poland. Because of this, I live in the cheapest flat I could find to save as much money as possible.

I don't like my flat, and I would be embarrassed to bring any friends back there, so I do most of my socialising in the local pub. I try to stay out as long as I can, and since I am saving so much money on accommodation, I feel like I can justify spending a bit of money on buying drinks most nights.

I also have a good job, and I work in a sales team which often goes out for drinks to celebrate if somebody has secured a big sale. I say yes everytime there is a chance to go out, but I can never stop at just one or two.

Last week when I was out, somebody bumped into me and spilled my drink. I said "Watch where you are going" and when he heard my accent he said "Go back to where you came from". I got angry at this and things turned violent and the police came and issued me with a fine. I am worried about the impact this might have on my job if my boss finds out.

Barriers

- Isolated - away from family support network
- Cultural differences
- Drinking culture at work
- Experiences of discrimination
- Worried about impact on work if he accesses services
- Low income (as he is sending money to family)
- Distrust of authority after police fine

Solutions

- Training for police
- Police to make a referral to services that could help him
- Connect him to people in the Polish community
- Better information online

Kamala

I want help but I am afraid about what others, especially my community, would think if they knew



About me

Kamala, 42

- My family moved to Nottingham when I was a child, and I have lived there ever since.
- I was born in Bangladesh, and I am a practicing Muslim.
- I am widowed with four children in Sneinton.

My story

I lost my husband not long after our fourth child was born. I had not drank anything since I was a teenager, but I started drinking again to cope with the grief (mainly spirits). I have been hiding my drinking from my children, and mostly drink when they have gone to bed, although sometimes I drink when they are in school as well.

I would like to stop drinking, because I know it is Haram (forbidden by Islamic law), but I don't know how to. I tried booking an appointment with the GP but when I got to the waiting room I saw that the receptionist was from my Bangladeshi community, and I panicked and fled before seeing the doctor. I couldn't bare for people to find out I had a problem.

I tried going somewhere for help outside of my local area, but in the end I stood by the door and couldn't face going. I have seen treatment and recovery centres advertised in local magazines, but many revolve around group sessions and it all seems very public. I need to keep my problem private.

Barriers

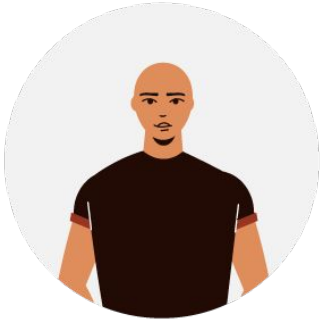
- Religious barriers
- Feels guilt and shame
- Stigma for Asian women
- Worried about others in community finding out
- Bereavement and trauma issues
- Lack of information about other services
- Confidentiality services not culturally competent

Solutions

- Mosque and community events
- Communication and advertising
- Gender support
- Family focussed approach
- Letting her decide how and when she can access services
- Joined-up working
- Holistic approach
- Anonymity
- Give a legitimate reason to attend
- Build trust
- Create a warm and welcoming space
- Educate community services
- Recognise recovery isn't linear

Mehmet

My substance abuse has left me at the brink of homelessness



About me

Mehmet, 31

- I came to the UK when I was 24 in search for a better life, and I have been here now for 7 years.
- I came to look for work but I have struggled to find anything.
- I have been issued with No Recourse to Public Funds and my appeal is being processed.
- I move between hostels and the streets in Nottingham.

My story

I came to Nottingham because I thought my quality of living would be better in the UK than in Albania, but I didn't realise it would be so difficult to find work.

Quite soon I found myself homeless, and a lot of other homeless people around me were using drugs to help cope with their difficult situation. A friend who was also homeless offered me some heroin, and after that I was hooked.

To help fund my habit, I started to steal, and I have had a few run ins with the police

I have tried to live in hostels but I am often asked to leave because of my behaviour, so I quickly find myself on the street again.

I don't trust people in authority and I don't know what help I would be entitled to as I am with No Recourse to Public Funds.

Barriers

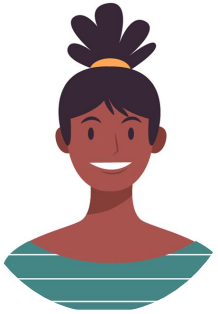
- No job or financial security
- No permanent address or fixed contact point
- Trapped in the system and feels prevented from seeking help
- Mistrust of services
- Cultural and language barriers

Solutions

- Street outreach
- Soup kitchens
- Criminal Justice Services
- Drug treatment
- Training for support staff so that they can pull in other services eg immigration advice and specialist NRPF grants

Natasha

Turned to drugs because of grief



About me

Natasha, 17

- I am dual heritage.
- My dad is from Barbados and my mum is white British.
- I live in a flat with my mum in Carlton.

My story

My dad died last year and I have been struggling to cope with his loss. He had bowel cancer, which wasn't taken seriously for a long time, but eventually he caught Covid and died of pneumonia.

I have been struggling to sleep at night because of the trauma of it all, so I started taking some left over pain medication (Codeine) from my dad's illness that I found, which I remembered used to make him drowsy.

I tell myself that I am just 'self-medicating' to help me deal with my loss.

When I ran out of my dad's prescription medication, a friend said that I could get some more from the a dealer in school. I have managed to get some more from the dealer now, but because he knows my situation he is also suggesting other drugs that he is selling that he says 'will help you forget about your troubles'.

I haven't been able to talk to anyone about this - I have thought about speaking to the school nurse, but she is white and after seeing how my dad was treated, I don't think she will take me seriously.

Barriers

- Trauma and grief
- Struggling to speak to people about loss
- Single-parent household
- Adolescent age
- Dual heritage - doesn't feel understood
- Mistrust of healthcare services
- Feels alone and isolated
- Schools' drug policy

Solutions

- Support for grief and trauma
- Give encouragement to be open
- Address bereavement alongside substance use
- Hearing the stories of peers
- School intervention
- Drug awareness courses
- Teachers trained in drug awareness
- Non-punitive approach

Danior

I am struggling with school - no-one understands me



About me

Danior, 13

- My family have Roma Heritage
- We came to UK three years ago and have moved around loads.
- I live at home with Mum, Dad my brothers and sisters - five in total - in Sneinton.
- I love to play computer games and chat to kids like me all over the world
- I have an undiagnosed learning difficulty.

My story

I don't like going to class. Too hard to understand what people are saying - classmates nor teachers.

I've found it hard to learn English, it's frustrating.

The only thing I like is when I can make my classmates laugh, they laugh when I mess about. I am always getting detention for this and for uniform, homework, messing about. I am just trying to make friends but every time I do we move again. Sometimes I skip school completely, because I feel like there is no point because we will just move again. Starting new schools can be tough - recently I got into a fight because one of the boys in my class called me a Gypsy - I'm not a Gypsy, I'm Roma.

I help myself to a couple of my dad's beers when I head out in the evenings, just makes it a bit easier to make friends – they all want to try it. Once my dad caught me, and beat me because of it - he always hits me if I do something wrong, and sometimes over nothing much if he's been drinking. He hits my mum and other siblings too sometimes.

My big sister is at my school and helps me understand what teachers are saying. They always want to talk to me about one thing or another.

In our last conversation, they offered me more help with studying and learning English but we'll see how long this lasts.

Barriers

- Language
- Poor learning experiences
- Has difficulties learning
- Class clown - not taken seriously
- Always moving, not fixed address
- Easy access to highs in the home
- Feels excluded

Solutions

- Use technology as an intervention
- Raise awareness with school around drugs and alcohol
- Screen for learning difficulties
- Use a professional interpreter
- Better engagement with parents

John

I have had a difficult life, and addiction is making things worse.

About me

John, 32

- Not sure about ethnicity
- I was abused by my parents, and have been in care from a very young age
- I have poor mental health, and suffer from PTSD from my difficult childhood
- I have three kids but each from a different partner
- Several convictions for stealing with community punishments. Last conviction resulted in custodial sentence
- Currently has no fixed abode

My story

The abuse I suffered as a child has been very traumatic, and I started drinking in my early teens to manage the pain. I struggled in school and have only ever had low-paying jobs since then.

After my first divorce, my PTSD started getting worse and my anxiety attacks become more intense. People I knew, who had been in care with me, offered me heroin. For a short time, it helped me to forget my past. But relationships and jobs have been impacted by my addiction. My kids don't want to speak with me, and I am now squatting with others like me.

I have had to go to hospital a few times because my arm has gotten infected from using needles that weren't sterile.

I am always being stopped and searched by police. I know I have been arrested several times for stealing but what else can I do for money. Before I just got community sentences but the last time I spent 26-weeks in prison. They said I was a 'persistent offender'. My probation officer, Dorothy, has been helping me with my addiction as she thinks this will keep me out of trouble.

It is nice to have her help and I try but I am not sure if it will make any difference. So many people in the past have said they are here to help me but nothing seems to change. I am just tired of life.

Barriers

- Trauma and poor mental health
- Lost faith in the system
- Heard it all before - too familiar
- Services very familiar with him too
- Poor financial situation
- Difficult family situation
- Severe multiple disadvantage (SMD)

Solutions

- Identify what needs are
- Multi-agency, joined-up working (including partnerships)
- Avoid labels
- Psychosocial interventions
- Housing/ tenancy support
- Person-centred approach
- Ensure a positive experience
- Outreach