

UK Support Directory

Substance misuse: finding the right help, information and treatment

You do not have to know exactly what kind of help you need before you make contact. A GP, local drug and alcohol service or national helpline can help you work out the next step. NHS guidance confirms that people can approach local drug treatment services directly as well as through a GP.

Start here

NHS drug treatment	GPs can discuss concerns and refer into treatment, but you can also contact a local drug treatment service yourself. NHS treatment can include a keyworker, talking therapies, medicines for some opioid dependence, detoxification where appropriate, self-help and harm-reduction support.
FRANK	Confidential drug information and help finding local support. Helpline: 0300 123 6600 . Text: 82111 .
UK SMART Recovery	Free mutual-aid meetings, in person and online, using practical evidence-based tools. Programmes also include Family & Friends and support tailored to other groups.
Narcotics Anonymous / other mutual aid	Peer-led recovery meetings can provide community and ongoing support. Your local treatment service can also explain which groups operate in your area.

What a local drug and alcohol service can help with

Treatment is not only for somebody who has decided to stop completely. Services can assess what is being used, physical and mental health, prescribed medication, overdose risk, withdrawal, housing, family circumstances and work. They can help reduce immediate harm, plan treatment and connect people with wider support. If opioids are involved, ask about naloxone and overdose prevention.

Mental health and crisis support

Substance use and mental health often overlap. If you are in immediate danger, someone is unconscious, cannot be woken, has abnormal breathing, a seizure, severe chest pain, signs of stroke or another suspected overdose, call **999**. For urgent medical advice that is not an immediate emergency, NHS 111 can advise. Samaritans can be contacted free on **116 123** for emotional support.

Support for families and loved ones

Families can need their own support even when the person using substances is not ready for treatment. NHS guidance points families towards Adfam, Families Anonymous, SMART Recovery Family & Friends and other specialist services. Support can include understanding dependence, boundaries, communication, overdose awareness and looking after your own wellbeing.

Young people

For a child or young person, seek age-appropriate support rather than assuming an adult service is the best fit. A GP, school/college safeguarding or wellbeing team, local authority services and local young people's drug and alcohol services can help identify the appropriate route. If there is immediate danger, use emergency services.

Legal advice

Release provides free, confidential advice on drugs law for people who use drugs and their families. Legal questions can include possession, police powers and other drug-law concerns. For an individual legal problem, use a suitably qualified adviser rather than relying on general online information.

Finding support locally

The NHS has an online service search for drug addiction support in England. Entering a town, city or postcode gives local options. FRANK can also help people find nearby support. Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland have their own health-service routes, so use the relevant national NHS service when searching outside England.

UK Support Directory — Choosing the Right Route

Different kinds of support can work together

There is no single 'correct' doorway into recovery. Someone may begin with a confidential helpline, then meet a local keyworker, use a mutual-aid group, see their GP about physical health and access therapy for trauma, anxiety or depression. The best directory is one that helps people move between these options rather than treating them as competitors.

Which route might fit?

I want confidential information first	FRANK or a reputable national information service can be a low-pressure starting point.
I want treatment	Contact your local drug and alcohol service directly or speak to your GP. NHS guidance says you are entitled to treatment for a drug problem like any other health problem.
I want peer support	Explore UK SMART Recovery, Narcotics Anonymous or other local mutual-aid options. It is reasonable to try different formats.
I am worried about somebody else	Use family-specific support such as SMART Family & Friends, Adfam or Families Anonymous, alongside local services.
I need legal information	Use a specialist drugs-law service such as Release.
I think this is an emergency	Call 999 for suspected overdose or another immediate serious medical danger.

What to say when you make contact

You can keep the first conversation simple: what you are using, how often, whether alcohol or prescribed medicines are also involved, what is worrying you most and whether you have experienced withdrawal or overdose. You do not need a polished explanation. If stopping suddenly might carry withdrawal risk — particularly with alcohol or benzodiazepines after dependence — say this clearly and seek medical advice rather than attempting an unsupported abrupt withdrawal.

Before relying on a directory entry

Services change. Check the organisation's current website or NHS listing before travelling, and check opening hours and eligibility. If one route does not fit, that does not mean there is no help available. Ask where else you can be referred or search again for a service designed around your age, substance, family role or location.

Useful national starting points

NHS: drug addiction support information and the England service finder.

FRANK: confidential information, helpline and local support finder.

UK SMART Recovery: free in-person and online mutual-aid meetings, including Family & Friends.

Adfam: information and support routes for families affected by substance use.

Release: specialist drugs-law information and advice.

Samaritans: emotional support on 116 123.

A message from Maggie

Finding support can be surprisingly exhausting when you are already overwhelmed. One service may focus on treatment, another on family support, another on mental health or practical problems. You do not have to solve all of that before reaching out. Start with the doorway that feels manageable and tell them what else is going on. Asking for help is allowed to be the first step rather than the final, perfectly organised plan.

Clinical and directory note

This directory is an information resource, not a substitute for individual medical or legal advice. Contact details and service eligibility can change, so check current official information before publication and before attending. In an immediate medical emergency or suspected overdose, call 999.