

NGAGE

with Aquarius

Supporting young
people to make positive
choices around drug
and alcohol use



SERVICE INFORMATION FOR PARENTS

NGAGE is managed by **Aquarius**, A Midlands-based charity supporting people to change their behaviours and live a life they value.

NGAGE with us

We are **NGAGE with Aquarius**. We work with young people aged 10–25 across North Northamptonshire to provide specialist drug and alcohol services.

NGAGE is a free and confidential service that offers young people support, advice, information, and education about drugs and alcohol.

We have a Youth Participation Worker who ensures young people's voices help shape and improve our service. They also run our youth groups, Evolve (ages 12+) and Rise (ages 18–25), which provide positive activities and opportunities for young people to get involved.

All **NGAGE** staff are safely recruited and have enhanced DBS checks, so you can feel confident your child is in safe hands.



Who can use **NGAGE**?

We support young people aged 10-25 across North Northamptonshire

Young people who access the **NGAGE** service come with a variety of experiences related to drugs and alcohol, including:

- Looking for advice and information about drug or alcohol use
- Spending time with others who may be using drugs or alcohol and could be vulnerable
- Using drugs or alcohol and wanting to reduce the harm it causes
- Wanting to cut down on their drug or alcohol use, or stop completely
- Needing an opiate substitute prescription
- Needing support to access inpatient detox for alcohol dependency

Each individual accesses the service in a different way for different reasons.

Young people referred to the service must consent to the referral.

We typically meet young people in places close to them, where they feel comfortable, such as schools, youth counselling offices, or sometimes their own homes.

Our administrative base is in Wellingborough, and young people are only seen here by booked appointment.

What does **NGAGE** offer?

NGAGE is a confidential and voluntary service supporting young people. Our support is flexible and tailored to each young person we work with, but often includes:

- Providing information, advice, and support around drug and alcohol use
- Offering 1:1 sessions and personalised care plans
- Helping young people achieve their goals and access positive activities, training, and peer mentoring through Evolve and RISE youth groups
- With consent, providing brief or structured family support
- Working with CAMHS for young people with mental health and substance use concerns
- Accepting direct referrals from practitioners
- Outpatient clinic for young people attending A&E with drug- or alcohol-related injuries or illnesses, with referrals made by A&E staff
- Group sessions providing information, education, and harm reduction, delivered at schools, youth clubs, children's homes, and other outreach venues across North Northamptonshire
- Volunteering and training opportunities for young people through Evolve and RISE youth groups



OUR SUPPORT

At **NGAGE**, we look at each young person's quality of life and what they currently get from using drugs or alcohol, such as **feeling relaxed, keeping busy, or managing anger**. From there, we explore ways to achieve those same benefits without relying on substances.

Telling young people that they might develop mental health problems or become dependent in the future is often not helpful. It can be hard for them to relate, especially if they know others who have used drugs or alcohol without obvious issues. Focusing on distant consequences also does not inform them about immediate risks.

When setting goals around substance use and lifestyle changes, we work with each young person to be realistic and find what works for them. Tools such as drug or alcohol diaries and relapse prevention plans help them achieve their goals. Success with one goal can build confidence to take on bigger challenges, including reducing or stopping drug or alcohol use entirely.

"It is really great to have someone to talk to who understands the issues"

NGAGE CLIENT

TACKLING CANNABIS AND ALCOHOL

Over the past few years, we have seen more young people accessing **NGAGE** because of problems with their cannabis use. However, there is often confusion about how harmful or problematic cannabis can be.

Similarly, many people see alcohol as more socially acceptable, but it can be just as harmful as other drugs. The information below is designed to help you and your child if you have concerns about their cannabis or alcohol use. We've compiled the information below to help you and your child:

I'm concerned my child is using drugs or alcohol...

- **Try not to get angry or judge them.** Even if you feel annoyed or disappointed, expressing this may make your child defensive.
- **Keep the conversation open and show interest in what they do.** Listening is far more productive than telling them you're disappointed.
- **Avoid confronting them when they come home under the influence.** Have a calm discussion once the effects have worn off.
- **Ask if they would like to speak to a **NGAGE** worker** for accurate information about what they are using. Many young people rely on peers for information and may believe myths.
- **You may find the questionnaire later in this booklet helpful.** If your child is uncomfortable sharing answers with you, they can fill it in privately. The results may help them see they need support.
- Don't hesitate to **reach out to **NGAGE** for guidance and support.**

DRUGS AND THE LAW

It's important to be clear about what you will and won't allow in your home.

Allowing a young person to use drugs on your property, including your garden, is a criminal offence under the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971, Section 8.

CANNABIS RISKS

Because cannabis is not physically addictive, many people mistakenly believe it cannot cause problems. However, it is often combined with nicotine when smoked, which can increase the risk of addiction.

However, problematic drug use isn't just about physical addiction.

Cannabis can be psychologically addictive and affect many areas of a young person's life, including their physical and mental health, motivation, daily routine, relationships, finances, living situation, and ability to attend school or work.

Young people trying to stop using cannabis often experience cravings, especially if they have relied on it to relax, have fun, or socialise.

Cannabis is also illegal, so using it can put young people at risk of a criminal record.

Many young people who use NGAGE primarily smoke cannabis and do not use other drugs. Everyone has their own reasons for seeking support, but some common ones include:-

- Suffering from mood swings
- Having arguments at home
- Being at risk of becoming homeless
- Struggling to concentrate and keep up with school work
- Risking temporary or permanent exclusion from school
- Involvement in petty crime
- Friendship groups changing due to drug use
- Escalating drug use leading to tenancies being at risk
- Nicotine withdrawals

ALCOHOL RISKS

Alcohol is a depressant, which means it slows down the body's responses. While it may feel good in the short term, it can have long-term effects on health and wellbeing. Alcohol use and binge drinking are becoming more common among young people, and **NGAGE** has seen an increase in young people seeking support for alcohol use.

Some key risks include:

- Feeling out of control and behaving differently, such as slurring words, losing balance, vomiting, or becoming aggressive or upset
- Alcohol is toxic to the body and depresses the brain stem, which controls essential functions like breathing, heartbeat, and swallowing
- Developing psychological and physical dependence over time. Tolerance increases the more you drink, so it may seem like you're handling alcohol better, when in fact a problem may be developing
- Alcohol use contributes to serious societal problems, including personal injury, violent crime, domestic violence, and road traffic accidents
- Serious over-drinking can lead to alcohol poisoning, which can result in coma or even death

"I learnt a lot about myself, especially under the influence of alcohol. I now know my limits and the need to take my time if I drink alcohol."

NGAGE Client

DRUG HARM REDUCTION

Drugs are constantly changing and are often mis-sold. They may not contain what you expect and can include synthetic substances like Spice or other synthetic opioids, **which are Class A drugs.**

- Don't mix - do one or stick with none!
- Test it in a small dose to know what you're taking.
- Where are you? Can you get home safely? Can you call for help if needed?
- Always start with a small dose even if you know what you're taking, or you've had it before.
- Do you trust the people around you? Are they sober? Can they help in an emergency?
- Break, take and wait - break pills into quarters, take one, then wait at least 45 minutes before taking more.
- Something new? Do your research. Websites like [Drugsand.me](https://www.drugsand.me) or services like Aquarius can help you understand the risks and effects.
- Can you recognise the signs of an overdose? Do you need to carry Nyxoid? Speak to Aquarius to find out.

"...amazing to be able to talk to someone and let it out and get it out of my system" - NGAGE CLIENT

NGAGE QUESTIONNAIRE

Unsure if a young person needs support with substance use?

Even if they say everything is fine, you can use this questionnaire to help highlight any concerns.

1. **Are the effects of the drug or alcohol more important to you than the thrill or adventure of using it?**
2. **Do you have a favourite drug or type of alcohol?**
3. **Do you ever use drugs or alcohol alone?**
4. **Do you use drugs or alcohol to cope with feeling sad, bored, lonely, confused, or anxious?**
5. **Do you think a lot about drugs or alcohol?**
6. **Do you plan your day around using drugs or alcohol?**
7. **Do you need to use more drugs or alcohol to get the same effects as before?**
8. **Do you feel depressed, irritable, or anxious if you do not use?**
9. **Do you crave or miss your favourite drug or alcohol?**

Scoring: "Yes" = 1, "No" = 0

A total score of 5 or more may indicate a substance use problem and that a more detailed assessment could be needed.

Substance misuse in adolescence questionnaire adopted from SMAQ; SWADI, 1997



WHO ARE **AQUARIUS**?

We are a charity supporting people affected by alcohol, drugs and gambling across the Midlands and beyond. For over 40 years, we've worked with individuals, families and communities to help them understand their behaviour, overcome harm and move towards a life they value

Everyone's experience is different. That's why we offer support that adapts to individual needs, life stages and communities:

Alcohol

We help people explore their drinking, reduce harm, and build strategies for change.

Drugs

We offer support to anyone affected by substance use, whether it's themselves or someone else's.

Gambling

We support both adults and young people across the region with advice, intervention and recovery.



CONTACT US

- Reassure your child that our service is confidential and that any information they share will remain private. **We will only share information if the young person gives consent.**
- An **NGAGE** worker can meet with young people informally to introduce the service and explain how we may be able to support them.
- If your child is happy for a referral to be made, either you or your child can contact us.
- **Your child must be aware of and agree to the referral before it is made.**

Email: ypnorthamptonshire@aquarius.org.uk

Phone: 01604 633848

Website: www.aquarius.org.uk

Facebook: @aquariusnorthampton



You can also contact a specific member of the NGAGE team:

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