

# WISDOM ABOUT DRUG ABUSE

advice to schools, child protection and mental health care



CHANGE FACTORY



# WISDOM ABOUT DRUG ABUSE

Advice from young people with  
experience from drug abuse

The booklet is divided into 3 parts

the first part is about

**Reasons for drug abuse**

the second part is about

**The different systems**

the third part is about

**Life after drug abuse**





## Wisdom about drug abuse

Wisdom about drug abuse is a qualitative survey conducted by Changefactory, in collaboration with the Norwegian Council for Mental Health. With this, we hope that Norway will gain deeper knowledge about why young people abuse illegal drugs, and learn about how the systems can help them wisely. Wisdom about drug abuse is based on Changefactory's fundamental idea that we have to listen to those who are going to receive the help in order to know what is helpful.

The need for more knowledge from young people who struggle with drug abuse was clear in the survey MentalHealthPros (Changefactory and the Council for Mental Health, 2014). A clear answer from many young people who are struggling is that drug abuse is a form of escape.

"Many of us have tried drugs and some of us have struggled a lot with it. With the high, we can escape from what hurts and escape from hurting in our thoughts or bodies". (From the magazine MentalHealthPros).

In other qualitative surveys Changefactory has conducted among young people in the Child Protection System, schools and justice system, it has also been clear that we need more knowledge and wisdom about drug abuse.

The goal of Wisdom about drug abuse is that society will be able to take part in systematised knowledge about why young people abuse drugs and how it feels - presented by young people with their own experience. In this report, Norway is given ideas for new courses of action for how more people can get away from drug abuse. We hope politicians, professionals and the media get an insight into, and listen to these results.

**A big thank you to ExtraStiftelsen, which has supported this project.**

**Warm regards Change Factory**

## Words to begin with

We are young people who have abused drugs. We have experienced first-hand what it is like to be met by the help services, for better or for worse. And we have a lot of knowledge about what causes us to escape into drugs, and what it takes for us to get out of drug abuse.

This advice is for those of you who are passionate about us having a good life without drug abuse, and for those of you who have an open heart to take this knowledge seriously. Here you will receive knowledge from young people for schools, the Child Protection System, Children and Adolescents' Psychiatric Outpatient Services (BUP) and residential childcare institutions.

When you read this, know that we are sharing experiences and advice from the deepest parts of our hearts for those of you who can make a difference. We want you to take the advice and experiences and carry them with you when meeting those who come after us.

There are many different reasons why we have started abusing drugs, but something common to all of us is that we have been hurting inside a lot. Some adults have done things that have made things better inside us, others have done things that have made it difficult to stop abusing drugs. Here is our advice on how you can meet us wisely when we are struggling with drug abuse.

**Warm regards from us who have given the advice.**

I took control  
of my emotions  
by not feeling them



## **About the young people who participated**

58 young people who are struggling, or have recently struggled, with drug abuse, have participated in the qualitative survey.

These are boys and girls from several places across the country, mainly from the areas of Stavanger, Bergen, Eastern Norway and Trondheim. Their ages are 15-23.

40 of the young people were living in various residential childcare institutions at the time of data collection. Some had recently lived in a residential childcare institution, while others had been given other kinds of help.

More than half of the participants said they had experienced child neglect, drug abuse in the household growing up, or that they had parents or family members who used force, violence or abuse against them.

## **How the data was collected**

The answers were collected using the Changemethod. The method is based on Participatory Learning and Action (PLA), a participatory methodology where those who participate in the sessions convey experiences and advice. The participants in this qualitative survey mainly took part in sessions with other participants. Creative and visual methods were used to collect young people.

The majority of the young people took part in two sessions, to gain an in-depth understanding of the answers. Data was also collected through in-depth one-on-one conversations, messenger and phone calls.

## **The participants have answered all or several of the following questions:**

- What do young people explain as reasons for why they start abusing drugs?
- What do they think about their drug abuse?
- What help have they been given - what was good and what was bad?
- What advice do they have for how young people can avoid escaping to drug abuse?
- What advice do they have for how the help services can best prevent drug abuse amongst young people?
- What advice do they have for how the help services can best stop drug abuse amongst young people?

Answers that were repeated by many young people are summarised in this report. The answers are published as they were said, without analyses or theory.





we need to know  
that the adults really  
care about us,  
before they can set  
boundaries

# Reasons for drug abuse

## Escape from hurting

### Summarised knowledge

Most of us use drugs to escape from what hurts. Many of us have felt worthless and alone. Many have had bad self-esteem. The first times we use drugs, the bad feelings disappear. The high makes us feel better for a while. Some of us dare to be more social, some feel more joy. In the beginning, the high helps us to take control of the bad feelings by not feeling them. But gradually the drugs takes control over us. When it takes control, even worse things can happen. There can be more serious incidents and for many there will be major personal consequences. The drugs become heavier and some end up in prison, institutions, or lose their life.

Many of us have tried to say that something has been hurting at home since we were little. We have spoken out in different ways. Some have been quiet, some sad, some cheerful, some noisy, some have been out a lot and some naggy with adults. Some of us have very often brought people home from school, while others of us spend a lot of time at other people's homes. We would rather not be at home.

### Quotes:

Everyone was proud that I had stopped self-harming. But I just replaced it with drugs. Using drugs became the new self-harm.

It was about suppressing emotions. I was full of anxiety and hurting. When you use drugs, it's about taking control of your emotions. And then the drugs takes control of you. The high helped me stop thinking about and feeling everything that was hurting.

I was determined to have control inside me, but I couldn't do it and it was hurtful and awful. A quick escape from this was drugs. I took control of my emotions by not feeling them. And then I took control of my life with drugs.

The drugs become an escape from what you actually were escaping from. It was layer upon layer upon layer upon layer. I ran away from my problems, but now I'd rather have the problems I had.

Drugs became an escape from the two emotions upset and angry. I would rather be "happy" when I used drugs. All my life I've felt like I'm a burden to the world.

The drugs brought me back to the neutral part, it made me completely cold. When I used drugs, I didn't get a chance to develop my feelings. I couldn't put a name to difficult feelings.

Drugs made me believe that there was a little hope out there.

## Lack of belonging

### Summarised knowledge

Many of us have felt like we did not fit in. Did not fit in at home, in school or in society.

Some of us have also learned that it is not okay to be hurting. To be with others who abused drugs quickly became a place where we could feel a sense of belonging, a place where it was okay to feel hurt. A place where you were accepted even if you were different. For many of us, being with others who abuse drugs has been about being accepted and having a community to go to.

Some exercised extremely often. We all have a strong desire to be seen as being smart or eating little. Some get angry, hit and have very loud voices, others are almost invisible and very kind. Some of us hurt ourselves, play TV games all the time, gamble, steal or have sex with lots of people, to get validation.

If adults are unable to reach what hurts inside us, drugs become the last stop. Being high becomes a solution to not have to feel emotions. It is the last solution after we have tried to say that



something has been hurting for many years. For many of us, drugs can be something we never imagined we could do. We became who we never wanted to be.

### **Quotes:**

Using drugs was about belonging to a community. The only criteria is that you use drugs. If you aren't accepted anywhere, you'll still be accepted in the community with other people abusing drugs. There they accept everyone.

In the beginning, when I used drugs, it was about friendship and togetherness, that no one gives you weird looks. It was so easy to get into the community with other people abusing drugs because it was okay to have a hard time there and it was okay to be yourself.

The high became me, and it felt good. I came into contact with others who were using drugs and easily made friends in the community. We had a community through the drugs. Until everything went wrong.

## **Carry violence and child neglect**

### **Summarised knowledge**

Many of us have grown up with drugs, child neglect, violence or abuse. We have felt unsafe and have often felt that we were not good enough. Growing up in these homes can make us afraid. Scared of when we will be hit next? When will dad lose his temper? Did mum use drugs today too? Why is she just lying on the couch? Do we have food at home this week? We blame ourselves and begin to think, is it me? Am I taking up too much space? Is it because I didn't clean the house today? Is that why she doesn't like me?

And some of us don't understand why mum and dad do hurtful things to us. Could we have done something differently? Why are they punishing us, we're doing the best we can? We take on the responsibility and become mini-adults. We take on responsibilities we shouldn't have. Cleaning the house, cooking, picking up younger

siblings from kindergarten and school. We walk around the house and try to make as little noise or space as possible so that mum or dad won't hurt us.

And some of us begin to wonder if we are worth anything to anyone. Because how can we be worth anything to someone when they can do that to us? All the harsh and mean words we get from those who really should tell us that they love us and how proud they are of us, get stuck in our stomachs. We carry the lump that grows in our stomachs with us from when we are young.

For many of us, drugs have been a way of surviving with the experiences we have inside. Some of us have used drugs because we thought that was the way it was supposed to be. We have grown up without anyone telling us that it shouldn't be like that at home, that it's illegal. Some of us have felt that we have had to use drugs to show the world that things aren't good at home or inside us. We have had adults around us who have told us that it is not allowed to talk about what is happening in the family. Or adults who have not allowed us to feel fear, sadness, insecurity and then drugs become a way to suppress these feelings.

### **Quotes:**

My parents never gave me the opportunity to be with friends.

They had to have control over me. That meant that I didn't get the opportunity to be me. I lost all of my friends.

It was psychological and physical violence against us children that lasted over time and ended up stuck inside me. All of the people who became my friends had problems at home as well. We started with little pranks and then it continued with us all starting to use drugs.

At home, there was violence and drugs. The drugs took away what was hurting. I started drinking when I was 12, I didn't know how to cope.



we need help to  
get back up,  
immediately

I was both afraid of and loved dad at the same time. He was both scary and nice. When I was 10 years old, I wanted to be like my father. I was 12 years old the first time my dad let me try weed.

I used drugs because I was depressed, and there was drug use in my family. The Child Protection System and the police visited often. I started drinking alcohol when I was 12.

If you're not taught how to talk about what's bothering you at home, what the hell are you going to do? You'll have to scream! That's what works.

Dad gave me a lot of beatings. Mum was away a lot. I felt lonely at home and learned not to trust adults. But in the group of older youths, I felt pretty, funny and that I was mastering my life. Then I would use drugs with them.

## **ADVICE 1:**

### **In to the reasons**

In order to be able to help us get out of drugs, the adults in schools, municipal health centres, public health nurses, the Child Protection System, and residential childcare institutions have to first of all work to get to the root of why it hurts. Bad experiences can come from growing up, situations at school or from other experiences that life has given us. The common thing is that there are experiences that have gotten stuck. Most of us want adults to find out why we use drugs, so that they can help us. You have to do this together with us.

To break free from drug abuse, we HAVE TO be able to talk about what hurts. To be able to do that, it has to be safe enough. Adults can help find the right person or the right place, where it is safe enough. These need to be people who know how important it is not to share what we are talking about with others, without making an agreement with us first.

### **Quotes:**

For you to help us out of drug abuse, you have to always work to get to the root of why we use drugs. Once you've gotten to the bottom of why we actually use drugs, we need to figure out together how we can move forward without using drugs.

It helps to gain an understanding of why things have turned out the way they have. There is a reason why we have the problems we have. In order for us to be able to solve them, we have to get to the root of the problems. Together we have to find a solution for how we can deal with them.

Good adults talk in depth. A good adult takes time to get to know and understand. They don't make us feel guilty when we show anger but instead try to understand why we're angry. If you don't really know who we are and what it's about, you can't help us.

Ask us directly if we feel safe with you. Don't make it scary to talk about the bad things. Be curious, and ask us what kind of feelings we have.

Don't focus on the drugs in itself. We know that it's illegal and dangerous. Get to the bottom of it. After we've talked about why we use drugs, you have to show us that you want to help us find solutions. If we disappoint you, try to understand why it turned out the way it did. It's okay to be disappointed, but don't be angry. You can also tell us how it affected you, but without accusing.

## **ADVICE 2:**

### **Make an agreement with us before any information is shared**

Many of us have experienced earlier in our lives that what we tell adults is often shared with other adults without us knowing that they are doing it. This can be both with parents and professionals. This has led us to understanding that many adults think they own the information we give them, and we have started to feel unsafe. In



order for many of us to be able to open up, and for us to be able to speak honestly and straight from the heart, we have to know that what we say will not be shared with others, without there being an agreement with us first. When we open up and talk about difficult things, it is usually because we trust one of you. If the person we tell shares the information with other adults, it can feel like a big betrayal. The advice is, therefore, to have courage, keep your cool and not share anything until you can do it in collaboration with us. First, we have to feel safe enough. For many, it is not safe enough until we have become a little used to talking about it and have become used to hearing ourselves tell it.

**Quotes:**

When you bring up that I use drugs, we can agree together on how and when it should be shared and with whom it will be shared. We know our parents and know how they react, so it's best to do it that way.

After information has been given to parents, it is nice if you ask us if we want to talk. We need to know what will happen next and maybe how our parents reacted to what was said. Many of us don't dare or can't bear to talk to our parents after they find out.

I tell things because I trust the person, but when I find out that things are being shared, I stop trusting the person and close myself off. If you're going to be able to help me and solve my problems, you have to understand this.

One rule could be: If you can sleep with what I told you, then you don't need to say anything right now. If you can't sleep, you have to say so after you've talked to me about how and to who. Then I can share both small and slightly bigger things.

## **ADVICE 3:**

### **Feeling that we can succeed**

When drugs have become a big part of life, daily routines and for many it feels like a part of who you are, it hurts to give it up. In order to manage to stop using drugs, we have to achieve something different that feels important in life. It has to be something that is important to each individual. Achieving something and being passionate about something should not be underestimated. Adults' task has to be to find this little fire. Without it, it is easy to fall back into drug abuse.

Most of us need to master something that happens at school, in activities, in everyday life and in friendships. Residential childcare institutions, health services, schools and the Child Protection System have to, in collaboration with us and each other, create solutions so that we can master small and big things.

**Quotes:**

Some things that can be difficult may've been for a long time. For example, saying no, setting boundaries for oneself, showing irritation, feeling sad - without resorting to drugs - can be very difficult. But when I've done it, it's a sense of accomplishment.

It could be important to get small things done without drugs. This could be getting up in the morning, cooking, going for a walk or exercising, daring to tell someone that I want to meet them, paying bills. Small things, that may be normal. But for many, these little things can be victories every day.

I could feel myself accomplishing something if I was able to tell someone that I was scared or was able to put words to a feeling in general. Or daring to trust someone, that they would be with me without me having anything to offer other than myself. That also gave me a sense of accomplishment.

## ADVICE 4:

### Adults can help us away from drugs

Adults have to be honest with us. Once they are honest, more of us can be honest with them. When they share from their own lives, we feel more safe with who they are. Then it may be possible for us to talk about how life has been, how it feels now and what we wish for our lives going forward. The adults have to be warm. When we know they are warm, it is easier for us to accept advice. They cannot figure things out for us, it is our life. We have to find out the goals we are going to set for ourselves together.

How adults meet us is crucial for us to be able to open up and be honest. And without honesty, it is difficult to help us away from drugs. When we are met with trust, it makes us dare to trust an adult. Trusting someone else makes it possible to eventually start to trust yourself. Then we can more easily handle the difficult things.

if we relapse,  
give us warmth  
and love,  
don't tell us off



## Quotes:

### Honest adults

Put your cards on the table and be honest. We need to hear it as it is. Talk about feelings, bad and good. Dare to be direct in a respectful way.

Be open, be moved and show it. You have to dare to talk honestly about what you see and dare to talk to me about the hurting that makes me use drugs.

You have to be brutally honest and tell me about the consequences of using drugs, tell me that there's no future in using drugs. I need to hear that.

### Warm adults

The adults have to genuinely care about the person they follow up on. We need adults who truly, with all their heart, want to be around young people and thinks it's fun.

We ask you to dare to connect with us even if we feel restless inside and life goes up and down. We need love and care. There's a big difference between those who really care and those who are just at work.

Give us hugs and try to remember how long we've been drug-free. It means so much if you're proud of us.

If we happen to relapse, meet us with understanding and warmth as much as you can. Say that now we start on day 1 again. Show that you are willing to stand there with me through the ups and downs. I need them to cheer me on no matter what.

### Trust as the foundation

Don't discriminate against me or treat me with less respect because I use drugs. I'm a human being too, I have just made some bad choices.

The adults have to be able to say sorry. It's okay if an adult makes a mistake, as long as it's said for real afterwards.

Some employees use how long they've worked here against us. They say they've been here longer than us. They can talk about how well they know their job. This can feel like they see us as less valuable than them. But remember that my thoughts are important. I have knowledge about my life, which has to be the starting point for becoming drug-free.

### Personal life experience is strength

If you have your own experiences with drugs, please share it with us. Show that there is hope to get out and of having a life without drugs.

Share a little more about yourself, then it's easier to see you as a fellow human being. Tell us a little about yourself so that you don't just become a random person. It makes it safer for me and I feel that you aren't judging me.

It's much easier to talk to someone who shares their own experiences. When they then say that they understand, we can more easily believe that they do.

Those who can help are the adults who are personal, who dare to show who they are, what they like, that they have different feelings, that they're vulnerable and that they make mistakes.

It's nice to be able to talk to someone with experience from drugs, who understands more about what it's like and can give me hope.

### Collaborate with us, always

Don't set the goals too high for us, let us set the goals together with you. We have to feel that these are our goals, and we have to be pushed in directions we ourselves want to go. It's important that we create a goal for how I'll feel good inside without drugs.

If we aren't motivated to become drug-free then try to work with us to find that motivation. There's no point in you adults talking to each other to find it. But you can help us find the motivation within ourselves.



When I'm allowed to do something I'm really interested in, it's a different kind of escape, but a good escape!

It's difficult to get a person to stop taking drugs unless the person wants to themselves. You have to find out reasons why we should want to quit together with us. When it's hard to want to quit, give me some time to find a reason.

Adults should have more knowledge about drugs so that you can look for signs and help us. You have to ask deep enough questions. It's easier for a young person to answer questions from an adult than to take the initiative to tell them about bad things themselves.

You can't give up even if the young person doesn't open up right away. We have so many experiences that we may not want to or dare to. Many of us are afraid of losing people again or of being hurt. We don't quite dare to believe that you'll stay, which is why we don't open up so easily.

## The different systems

### SCHOOL

Two themes were often repeated when the young people were describing school. The young people felt left out and they were labelled as a problem.

### Feeling left out

#### Summarised knowledge

Most of us young people who have taken part in this qualitative survey have, in one way or another, felt left out at school. Some of us have also felt that we do not master the subjects and that we are stupid. We have too often and in various ways experienced that we have not managed or have not belonged there. Many of us have been bullied, have bullied others or both. We have felt lonely. Some have also felt the feeling of being invisible or small.

At the same time, deep down, we all have had a desire to belong somewhere. When it didn't work at school, it created a lot of cracks inside us. For many of us, drugs became a help against feeling left out and against the feeling of loneliness that often comes. It felt good to finally be able to belong to a group or a gang.

#### Quotes

It started at the end of primary school. I felt left out in class. A friend and I eventually clicked, and we joined a group of people that used drugs. When I wasn't with them, I was alone. I felt left out. The teacher didn't believe me, no matter what I said, at least it felt that way.

It became more difficult when I moved back to Norway. I participated in several sports, but wasn't good at anything. I was bullied for my ADHD. The whole class was gathered in a circle so that everyone would know.

I wasn't included in the class environment and sat for hours alone in the library. Then I found someone to hang out with who smoked weed. I had felt lonely, and the fact that I was no longer alone filled the void inside me.

I've felt so small when I've walked around the schoolyard. When I feel small, I become like a Rottweiler, I bark. I've been so incredibly sad and angry. Almost only that. But I'm actually a kind boy, just so sad that he got a little lost.

At school I often felt stigmatised and that the teachers believed that the reason I did what I did was that I lived in a residential childcare institution. They never talked to me about this. There was also a teacher who thought I buried myself and searched for what was painful. I skipped his classes and used drugs more often, I didn't feel safe where he was. You almost have to protect yourself from people who say that.

## Labelling, rewarding or punishing

### Summarised knowledge

Many of us have had different ways of trying to express how we feel inside. Some have been rude, restless or noisy. Some have bullied others or been angry with other pupils or with adults.

Many of us have then been spoken to or told off. Some of us have received warnings for what we have said or done. Many of us have experienced that the adults have commented on what we have done in front of other pupils, called home or brought it up in conversations with our parents. Some teachers have given us rewards when we have managed not to be upset or angry. In this way, many have experienced that adults have tried to get us to stop being the ones who are rude, cause trouble or who bother others.

By giving us a reward or a consequence, adults try to make things calm in the classroom and safe for other pupils. We understand that the purpose of this is good. What we think many adults don't understand is that the bad or hurtful things we do are very often a

way of saying that something inside us feels bad or hurtful. Many of us haven't had the words to say how we felt or we haven't felt safe enough at school to be able to say it in words. We have had difficult or hurtful feelings, which have come out because we could not do better. For some of us, it was the only way to survive. Some of us have been moved around to different schools, and not felt that anyone understood that there was something behind our behaviour.

### Quotes

From the start I was called a troublemaker. I often felt restless and was put at the back of the classroom. Maybe they could talk to me about why I was being noisy instead.

I had older siblings who had been in fights with teachers when they were in school. Right from the start the path was laid out for me, it felt like I had to talk to the principal before I even got to know my teacher. I fulfilled the role that the school had set for me.

I went to an alternative secondary school, together with other pupils who had been taken out of school. We influenced each other negatively instead of being helped to influence each other positively. Gathering all of us restless pupils in one place was not a good solution for me.

The only thing that would have helped, I think, was asking why I was using drugs. But as soon as I tried to be a little open about the drugs, it felt like I was pushed away. At the next school I tried to talk to the public health nurse. She believed me at first, but after dad joined meetings, she didn't believe me anymore.

I almost quit school and then I was taken out of the class. I was left alone to do school work. As a result, I didn't become very good at being with others. I beat up people and stuff like that during breaks.

## ADVICE 1:

### Talk about feelings

We have to learn to talk about feelings from an early age. First and foremost, because the road to drugs becomes shorter if we cannot put feelings into words. If we learn it, we can talk about what is hurting or stressful inside us. All classes have to have time for this in the schedule for the week. It can make it safer in the class and the pupils can get to know interests and how others think better. It can also make the pupils understand each other better, when bad things happen. Several of us have been hurting, and it could have helped if the class environment had been safer and warmer.

### Quotes:

Daring to feel emotions and knowing what the different ones are and not being afraid to feel, can contribute to young people not needing to use drugs. If you teach children to talk about feelings from an early age, so that they have words to talk about them, it becomes less scary to say out loud what you feel.

If it's safe enough and normal enough to talk about feelings, young people don't need to use drugs or hurt themselves or anything like that, to avoid feeling. Emotions need to be a focus from the time you're a child, and all the way until you talk about it as something you just do all the time.

If people talked more about both good and bad things, then probably fewer people would choose languages like drugs. Many children and young people live in homes where feelings aren't okay or normal to talk about, so the school and kindergarten have to have this as something you do all the time.

I bullied and slept just as well because I had no idea how it felt for others. I struggled with my self-esteem. But no one talked to me about it, neither at home or at school. If someone had talked to me about it, it might have helped. It could have made me more aware of what happened to the others when I hurt someone.

## ADVICE 2:

### Give information about drugs

We need information about drugs from a very young age. The information cannot only say how dangerous it is. And it cannot be judgmental. We need to understand the reasons behind drug use, what happens inside people and what it actually does to people. We need to know all the parts of drug use. We need to get information about how, for many, drugs are a way of escaping from something that is hurting or unsafe. The information has to give us an understanding of why someone chooses drugs even when they know it can cause harm. A person with experience of using drugs is welcome to come and talk.

### Quotes:

It's important that there's given good information that there's a reason why you're doing it, that it's about something that's hurting. Many people don't know that there are always reasons why someone uses drugs. It would've been useful to have information that makes you understand that it often is about not having to feel.

The school has to start giving the information as early as possible and at the latest in secondary school. You have to learn early what drugs are and how harmful they are. Inform me about drugs and what it entails, what consequences it can have and how it can affect people.

Some people know very little about drugs, so that might be one reason why many try. We need to know all the parts of starting with drugs, how it affects contact with people and what it does to people's lives in general.

Young people need to know the consequences. Not that it kills, but what it does to the people around you, and what it does to how you do things and take care of yourself.

If young people know that the people who use drugs do it because it hurts, then there are more people who can let someone know if someone starts doing drugs. Then it doesn't work as well to say that it's something everyone does just for the sake of doing it.



abusing drugs is  
an escape from  
hurting. It became  
layer upon layer



## **ADVICE 3:**

### **Work with community**

We don't choose to leave a community if we feel welcome in the community. Therefore, the school has to constantly work to ensure that all pupils feel that they are part of the community. It's hard to do well in school if you don't feel this. Some adults at school have to have a lot of responsibility for getting the young people into the communities so that everyone has someone they feel safe with. Feeling that you are part of a community can prevent drug abuse both at school and when you go home from school.

### **Quotes:**

The adults have to find out the reason immediately, if a child or young person spends a lot of time alone at school. Adults have to dare to ask and want to know the real reasons.

Ask direct questions so that the young person understands that you care. Feeling left out can be one of the things that causes people to start using drugs. At school, there have to be adults who work to make it safe for everyone to be with others.

There have to be activities for all types of interests during breaks and they have to be safe to go to, and managed by safe adults. Young people don't choose not to have friends because it's fun, there's a reason why it happens and then a drug environment can be attractive as a community.

The adults have to know what happens in a class environment and constantly contribute to making it safe and good for everyone. There may be people in a class who don't feel important to the community, make it safe so that the pupils in the class dare to say how they feel.

## **ADVICE 4:**

### **Do not punish or reward behaviour**

In order to prevent us from starting to use drugs, we need schools that do not punish us when we bully, make a lot of noise, arrive late, are angry or restless. We wish schools didn't use demerits, take us out of the classroom, or reward us when we do different things.

Because for most of us, it has been about the fact that we are hurting or difficulty inside and then we need adults at school who understand and wonder what lies behind our actions. We need adults who understand the hurt.

It's about what view the adults at school have of us. For many of us, it's felt as if the school thought they could reward and punish our behaviour. They thought that it gets better inside us just because we become calmer. But it isn't necessarily that way at all.

When we look calm, it may be precisely because the drugs numb the feelings inside us. We need to be able to talk about the feelings inside us so that we can manage not to start using drugs or continue to use drugs.

# RESIDENTIAL CHILDCARE INSTITUTIONS

## Living safely

### Summarised knowledge

All young people should have the right to live safely. We do not think adults have understood the seriousness of moving young people who struggle a lot with drugs, together with young people who struggle little or nothing. For many of us, drug abuse has increased a lot when we have been moved together with someone who struggles a lot with drugs. Being met in a way that says we have a drug problem, when we don't, makes us give up inside. We can also give up on adults.

### Quotes:

I was quite anti-drugs when I came to the institution, and then it hurt that people assumed I used drugs even though I didn't. Finally I gave up. There have been room search and stuff like that, but no one has really bothered to find out what it was really like inside me.

I tried to distance myself from the drugs, but it wasn't that easy when I was moved to an institution where another young person used drugs and gave me weed. Then it became very difficult for me to keep away. I tried to keep away because I wanted to join the military, but I lost that chance.

## Safe adults

### Summarised knowledge

Safe adults who show that they care about the young people, who we can trust and who trust us, are very important. They are the ones we dare to open up to, and then we can get good help. There are a number of them, and there should be more. But then those who educate people who will work in residential childcare institutions have to understand that they have to emphasise much

more that they have to work with human warmth. And they have to understand that they cannot train people to know better than others.

### Quotes:

Trust was the most important thing for me. I was met with trust and as a human being - not someone to be looked after. With one of the people who worked at rehab, it felt like he had always been there, I've told him a lot that he didn't share with the management because then it would've caused problems for me. I could be open with him and that helped me.

I got on well with the people who worked with me. Even though it was a job for them, they showed that they loved me. I received care and love that I haven't received in my childhood.

Group therapy is brilliant, because you create safety in the group and learn that you aren't alone. The first thing I heard was that the drugs are the symptom of the problem. One of the social worker who works here wants to learn from us, because he doesn't get sufficient knowledge from textbooks. He shows that we have important knowledge.

It was nice that the woman who worked there sat down with me and tried to find out why I suddenly started using drugs. The fact that they tried to find out together with me, what I could do instead of using drugs, that someone showed me that it can be solved in a different way than using drugs, was important for me to become drug-free.

An employee at my institution found weed in the room. The employee tried to talk to me and get me to give it up, which I eventually did. The employee chose not to search my room or call the police because the employee knows it would have done more harm than good. We've also talked a lot about it afterwards and I'm confident that the employee did it to help, and not to be mean or punish me. The fact that the employee chose not to search my room and call the police made me feel more safe that it's okay to make mistakes and I've felt more safe with the employee.

we have to  
create the  
boundaries  
together





Those who've cared about me have helped save my life. Many of those who thought they could find the answers to how they were supposed to help me, in a book, have made life worse for me. They can easily get a little full of themselves. What I've always needed are people who can share from their hearts and who don't think they're a floor above me.

## Activity is important

### Summarised knowledge

Activities at the residential childcare institution or treatment centre has helped save lives. For many, at least for a period of time, it has become the very meaning of life and something they could hold on to. It could be working on a farm, cooking, creating things with their hands, or fixing a car. It can also be to get involved in something big, to contribute something to the world, in an organisation or together with someone who is doing something important.

### Quotes:

Here I've been given something to do, for me it's helped to be active. Among other things, through activities the treatment centre offers, like working on a farm and being able to create things with your hands. I have also been able to chop wood, fix a car and learn how to cook.

We're out in the woods and fields a lot. These things are essential to me. We go on drives, play table tennis, the people who work there are committed to us. It helps to get me into it and "escape" that way, instead of turning to drugs.

Sitting with my own thoughts day after day with nothing to do isn't good for me, so doing things that are normal has been super important. Participating in some type of activity every day, or at least a few days a week, made me feel better somehow. I think it was about the fact that I'd lived in an environment where I didn't do anything normal in a way, so that it was important for me to experience things.

## ADVICE 1:

### Rules and boundaries are made in collaboration

For rules and boundaries to work, we first have to know that you who work with us care about us and wish us well. We need a few basic rules that many "ordinary" homes have. The rules and boundaries also have to be created in collaboration with us. It becomes easier for us to follow rules when we understand them.

### Quotes:

We have to know, before the adults can create boundaries, that they care about us and wish us well. If not, it can become dangerous and we can lose trust. We have to create the rules and boundaries together. We need to understand why the rules are there. But it's also important that the institution understands and asks, what it's about and how we feel inside, if rules are broken.

Rules at an institution have to be individual from young person to young person. This is because all young people are different and have different needs. The rules have to be made in collaboration with the young people. Then it'll be easier for the young people to follow them. The rules can be switched out and changed as the young people's needs change.

## ADVICE 2:

### Activity is important

For many, being active at the residential childcare institution and in drug addiction treatment is important. It means that we can focus on other things, and takes our minds off things. Being active can help you feel important. We can feel that we're waking up to something that fills up the days.

### Quotes:

Activity is important to us. It helps us take our minds off drugs and drug cravings. We have to learn to be able to have fun without drugs. It's good to do things with others

who're drug-free, or who're trying to. Many of us need to learn to have fun without using drugs.

It's good when we feel that the institution shows an interest in our interests. We need something to wake up to and something to fill the day. An interest that is encouraged and followed closely by someone is worth gold.

It can feel safe when the adults take an interest in my interests. We've also taken quite a few drives, and often cook together, while we sing and dance in the kitchen. Sometimes it helps to do something when things are difficult.

## **ADVICE 3:**

### **Community and warmth**

We all need to be met with trust and human warmth. We also need to belong to a community. Even if some of us pull away at the start, even if we are subjected to serious things growing up, and even if some adults think that we have to be protected from too much human warmth and community, we all need it. Feeling important to a community makes it harder to use drugs. When we relapse, we need warmth and trust, so that we can get back up after falling down.

### **Quotes:**

When we fall on our faces, please don't let us start from scratch again and lose trust in us, that's when we need to be met with warmth, curiosity and understanding - and last but not least we need the adults to help us to immediately get up again.

We need challenges and trust from the start. We have to be allowed to go out and try for ourselves. Going from lots of boundaries around you to suddenly being sent out can be difficult. We end up in a bit of a bubble inside the treatment, and this may not always be wise. After all, the goal is for us to manage as drug-free outside, so we should have to practise this from the start.

We need to be in a community where adults want to understand. We have to be met with trust and love even if we relapse. When I run away and relapse, it's wisest if you try to understand what this is about. Most of all, I need something safe and warm. And it's nice if someone says it's good that I came back.

Equality between us who need treatment and the people who work there is important. Many of us feel emotions like shame and guilt. Feeling important to the community makes many of us feel significant. When there's equality between employees and those in treatment, a sense of safety is created that we're good enough and that we're good people, this is important for many people to feel.

## **ADVICE 4:**

### **Talk about giving up drugs**

Talk to us about what we think it will take for us to stop using drugs. Remember that drugs have been a safety net for us, and that bad feelings can return quickly when we stop using them. Most of us lose many friends together with the drugs as well, which can hurt. It is important that you understand that this is often very sad for us. It is good if some adults we trust talk to us about this.

### **Quotes:**

Many young people may experience grief when they stop using drugs. Many strong emotions can come quite suddenly. Maybe it's strange to people, but it's actually like that. If you think that drugs have been a safety net from lots of feelings you're afraid of, it's quite scary to stop. So talking about grief and being scared is very important.

Some lose a lot of friends who have meant something in a way, some know that they have to change all their habits and this can make many people sad, angry and have a lot of other reactions. So, talking about what is both good and not so good about stopping is important for many. It's important to accept that it's sad in a way as well, people need to be able to talk about it in an honest way.

I am ready to  
get help when I  
feel like it's safe



## ADVICE 5:

### Knowing the manager of the residential childcare institution

The unit manager has to be responsible for getting to know the young people in the unit. When we know the manager, it becomes less scary to speak up if things do not feel right in the unit. It makes us safer and it becomes less scary in meetings where the manager is present.

#### Quotes:

The manager has to get to know us a little, and not just take what they read about us as a starting point when they have a role where they have to make decisions related to our lives. The managers are often involved in deciding many of the boundaries, about the boundaries, whether I'll be allowed to be with friends and leave. This is scary if they don't know us.

The managers often only listen to the employees, they rarely ask the young people how they feel there. The managers have to take the time to talk to us about what the people who work at the institution are like. The managers should visit more, see the employees, follow up more. I've wondered who do I go to when I am unhappy with an employee? It never goes up to the management.

The managers should be in the common rooms more, so that we can meet them and see who they are. The manager is often involved in meetings with us and it'll quickly become bad if the young people don't know who it is, then the conversation can become unsafe and scary quickly.

## MENTAL HEALTH CARE

### Can lose trust

#### Summarised knowledge

Many of us have experience from BUP and have known BUP first-hand. Some of us have been given good help, but many of us have experienced losing trust in the people who can help us. There are several of us who have experienced that it feels like we are being given up on by the therapist who is supposed to help us, and experienced that the therapist follows what is in the book and is not curious or wondering enough about why we have used drugs.

#### Quotes:

Many therapists give up too quickly on asking questions, it quickly becomes just talking on the surface level. It made me lose trust that they could help. Many therapists also think they know most things, and it feels like they don't value the knowledge we have.

I feel sicker when I sit in an office to talk about what hurts. Some therapists look down at the sheet, rather than straight at me. Being called a patient makes me feel sick and less confident that I can get help to talk about what hurts.

In the first meeting I had with the therapist at BUP, he stood ready to greet me with one hand and the diagnosis forms I was going to fill out in the other hand. I felt unwelcome when I sat there filling out forms while he was on the computer.



## Diagnoses and medications

### Summarised knowledge

When we receive diagnoses, many of us feel that we are not allowed to talk about what hurts. It also feels scary with diagnoses, we get scared that it could ruin things for us later in life. Many of us who have received medication from BUP have used the medication as a drug.

### Quotes:

I was already met with an offer of medication during the second conversation I had at BUP. The doctor bragged about how good the medication was and that everything would get better if I just took it. It made me feel like they just wanted me out fast and couldn't or wouldn't help me.

I was diagnosed with ADHD and medicated with Ritalin which got me high, they should have understood that it wasn't very smart. When BUP gave me ritalin I stopped eating, I couldn't sleep so I got some other medication to be able to sleep. I started taking more than I should, and the drug use escalated from there to other heavier drugs. I think it would have been wiser to talk to me more about how I was feeling.

I got some medications in drug addiction treatment, I got high, but on legal medications! I felt that medication was used wrong for me, and I think it was scary that this was in the treatment. I felt it took me longer to get drug-free because I was kind of given drugs as part of my treatment.

I ran away from BUP because they wanted to give me a diagnosis and then I wouldn't be able to join the military because people with a diagnosis have problems joining. I wanted it very much and think it was very painful that this was the help they wanted to give me, or at least it felt that way. BUP are very quick to give diagnoses, I've heard that you can lose your job if you have a diagnosis, or that you can't get another job.

## Good therapists

### Summarised knowledge

Some of us have met good therapists in BUP. What they have in common is that they show emotions, give hugs, show that they have trust in us and talk about their own lives. It makes it easier for us to open up to you and to talk about the bad things.

### Quotes:

My therapist shared from her own life. That made it easier for me to open up. If I had a good day, we didn't necessarily have to talk about bad things, but rather everyday things. But she took me just as seriously if I came in two days later and was in a bad mood.

My therapist spent time getting to know me. No matter how many times I ran out of her office, she met me with respect in the next conversation.

The therapist has helped me a lot, she shows trust, talks about her own life. She's more like a friend, that makes it easier to talk and open up about difficult things.

Met a therapist who I developed a good relationship with, who offered to come with me to meetings with NAV (Norwegian Labour and Welfare Organisation), work, etc., as it was a great strain for me to go there alone. The therapist asked me if I wanted a hug after one meeting, and I did.

She dared to say straight out that she cared about me, she fought for me to be allowed to go to her appointments even though I didn't really have an exit from the institution. She was a bit "unprofessional" and she was a safe person I could cry with, she understood that I was hurting inside.

Even though it was work for them, they showed that they cared about me, it felt good. What's important to me is that my therapist doesn't beat around the bush. She says what she thinks, very honestly, it has taught me that I know she can handle it.

my therapist  
shared from  
her own life.

that made it  
easier for me



## ADVICE 1:

### First and foremost a human being

We feel sicker when we are called a patient. And feel less normal when we are seen as a case. Call us by our name, we are first and foremost a human being with each of our stories.

#### Quotes:

Don't call me the patient when you talk to others in front of me. It makes me feel like I'm not a normal person. It's important that the therapist views us and speaks to us as a human being, and doesn't make us feel like a case or a client.

You get so many labels that you lose yourself: I don't feel like an individual with all the papers and case numbers. Not using names makes me distance myself! Don't put a label on us, I'm a human being with a story.

Use names, say the young person, the child or the name. It costs nothing to ask "How would you like to be referred to?" Use the words young person and adult, it makes it safer.

## ADVICE 2:

### Listen and get to know us

Get to know us. And we need to get to know you. It cannot be one-way communication. We feel like sharing when we get to know you.

#### Quotes:

We need to get a therapist who we can have for a longer period of time, so that we can open up and show our whole selves. We need to not have to open up to many people and tell our story over and over again.

Try to understand what I'm saying. When a child tells two stories, you can find out which one is true. Don't kick us out, but try and find out what you can help us with.

No one makes out on the first date. Can't expect that just because I've been there once, I'm going to tell my life story.

Get to know each other before meeting, we need to know something about the person we're talking to, then we'll want to share. You have to put yourself out there - it's not one-way communication. Take time to get to know us and build trust before you expect us to open up.

## ADVICE 3:

### Into what hurts

First of all BUP has to get to the cause of the expressions of hurting. As many of us experience BUP today, too much time is spent on treating diagnoses. After all, diagnoses are just expressions of something that is difficult or hurting. Instead, BUP has to understand why things have become as they are, talk about emotions, and process trauma. BUP has to give us tools to make life better as well.

#### Quotes:

Create a relationship first and foremost, that's the most important thing, and after that you have to go into the things that hurt, like history and experiences.

Trauma-based help over time that makes me build relationships, see my life in a timeline and understand why things have turned out the way they have a little more, so that I can understand that it isn't my fault.

Process traumas, bring out triggers and find out how I can live with them or get rid of them. The truth comes when they ask the right questions.

Talk about feelings and dare to feel them and that it's okay.

Have regular things like an outpatient group where we sit in a circle and have a jar with a theme that comes up that we talk about. Can talk about anything, becomes like group therapy with others who have experienced the same things. The employees are just there.

Meet us with understanding and ignore diagnoses. Dare to talk to me about the drugs and why I get high. It won't make me worse, like some people think.

## ADVICE 4:

### Safety for honesty

To be able to speak honestly, we need to feel safe. In order for it to be safe, we have to have a say in deciding where we will talk, and who we will talk to. During the conversation, the therapist has to look at us with warm eyes and have a warm body language, this helps for safety.

### Quotes:

Not being met in an office, but meeting in normal surroundings, in a park on a bench, walk and talk. The therapist has to dare to ask critical questions - what's hidden has to come out.

Take it slow, don't rush.

It's nice that you care and show love. Ask, is it okay to give a hug? And always remember to feel with your heart in everything you do.

Talk to the child or young person if there's anything special we're going to talk about. Don't sit and write while I speak, rather look at me with warm eyes and understanding. It makes it easier to be honest.

## THE CHILD PROTECTION SERVICES

### Help came too late

#### Summarised knowledge

Many of us have experienced that the help we have been given has not been right, or that the help has come too late. Several of us have experienced that we have not been taken seriously until it had gone too far. Several of us say that we have needed help all our lives, and that drug abuse has been a cry for help and only then, we were heard.

#### Quotes:

I had known for a long time that I was hurting in different ways. The Child Protection System didn't come until after I tried to take my own life. I'd needed help long before that, ever since I started showing the hurt. If I'd gotten help sooner, I wouldn't have wasted so much time of my life.

It had to hit rock bottom before I got the right help. It's as if it has to go too far before anyone bothers to listen. You can be passed around in the system. It was only when I was completely destroyed by drugs that the Child Protection System was properly put on my case. It had to get really bad before the Child Protection System did something, it felt hurtful. I've never been given as much help as after I got sober, I wish I had gotten that help earlier.

My contact person took me seriously, she was genuinely concerned. I was very high and she discovered it. Mum hadn't seen me in weeks. Thank goodness I had a contact person who wanted to understand.

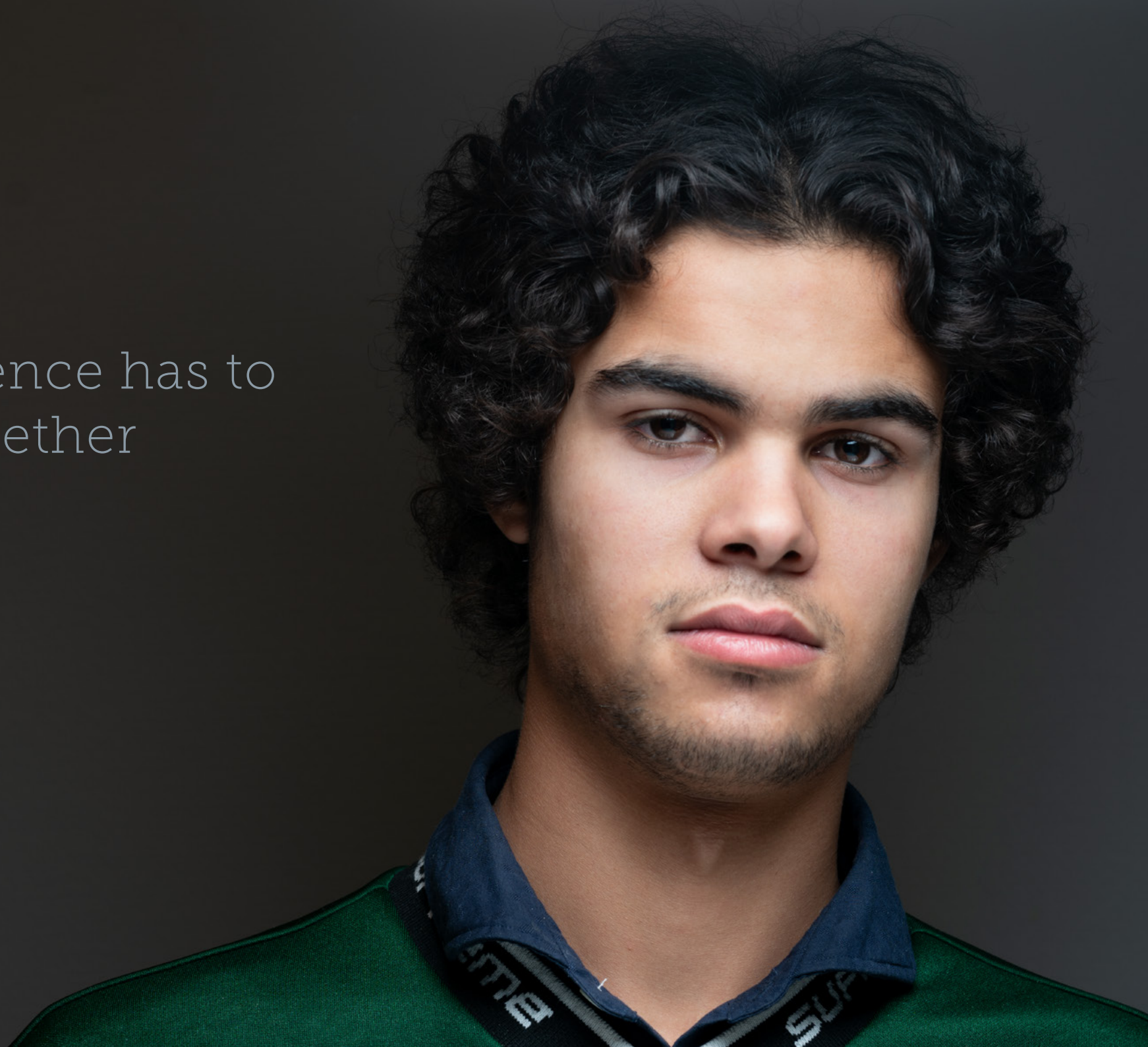
### Fixing the behaviour

#### Summarised knowledge

Many young people who have struggled with drug abuse have experienced that the Child Protection System has put measures in



consequence has to  
come together  
with love



place to fix our behaviour in the past. Some examples of that are MST (Multisystemic Therapy) and ART (Aggression Replacement Training). For many of us, these measures have gone very wrong, and the drug abuse has gotten worse afterwards. It has felt like the adults were going to fix us, that they came and took control over us and that all the blame was shifted onto us - when really, we were just feeling very hurt inside or at home where we lived. When the Child Protection System put measures like that on us, we lost trust and were unable to be honest about how it was at home and the feelings we had inside afterwards.

### **Quotes:**

Asking me to count to ten doesn't work! There's a reason why I'm angry, that's what I need to talk about. My anger is just a reaction to something that hurts inside me. ART doesn't help with that.

MST wasn't good for me, I made excuses, got NOK 5 per apology and spent the MST money on weed.

Rules were decided for me without me knowing it before they were decided. Just felt they came into the home and took control. There was a reward system if I managed the goals. But they weren't goals I believed in.

I didn't get to talk about the reason for my actions, only about the action itself. The solutions become very short-sighted then.

## **ADVICE 1:**

### **Safe enough**

The Child Protection System has to make it safe enough so that we can be completely honest about the fact that we do drugs and the help we want. They have to help us and find a safe place that we can go to when we are hurting or when we get drug cravings.

### **Quotes:**

They have to be available on the phone in the evenings, because that's the time when you often feel cravings or that things hurt. They have to at least give us a place where we can be safe.

If you get scared, breathe and be honest about how you feel! If I dare to admit that I've taken drugs, try not to be afraid and freak out. How will we dare to talk about things then?

## **ADVICE 2:**

### **Collaborate with us**

We need as few people as possible to deal with. When you have to make decisions about our lives and where we will live, this has to be done in collaboration with us. We often have the solution, and know what is wise. Do not move us to institutions where there are young people with serious drug abuse problems when we don't do drugs, or use drugs to a small extent. Moving to another place always has to be decided together with us. Take care of us. We need lots of love and warmth.

### **Quotes:**

If you don't know much about drug abuse, it's a good idea to quickly acquire information that is important for me to know. Maybe you can ask me and then we can figure it out together. This can make me feel like it's a collaboration and that you care about what I'm able to do.

If the child protection service is concerned and is considering moving me to a residential childcare institution for drug abuse, they have to talk to me about it, so that I can try to do something about the drug abuse if I don't want to move.

The child protection service have said that they will collaborate with me, but I abused drugs for several months before my contact person contacted me. Then they hastily moved me out of the institution I was living in without giving me a chance to explain. It made me lose all trust in the Child Protection System.

Don't put us under coercion and think that the drug abuse will go away. I need to have a say in decisions about my life for it to feel good for me. It feels hurtful if it happens too fast for me. Talk about feelings and give information about what drugs can do to people in the long run, both with relationships, emotions, physically and psychologically. Show that you care a lot and tell the person concerned that you're afraid of what this will do to them, give them lots of love and don't tell them off.

## Life after drug abuse

There are many people who will need help to come up with activities they can do, know which places they can go to, build social networks, break away from social networks, find a place to live, find a job or apply for school. All this should be planned well in advance together with those of us who are undergoing treatment and followed up afterwards. Many people find it scary to leave treatment, some have no idea where to go, what to spend their time on and who to be with. Then it's easy to find a way back to what existed before treatment.

### **ADVICE 1:**

#### **Get support and help to work on yourself**

We need help and support to continue working with what we have been working on in treatment. We need the opportunity to have someone to go to who can listen, give us tips and advice. We know that we have to do the work and set the goals ourselves, but things become easier when we know that we have someone who loves us, cares and helps us when things get extra difficult.

It is easy to think that you are done with drugs when you have finished treatment. But several of us have experienced a shock in meeting our new lives without drug abuse. We need to be prepared for life after treatment.

#### **Quotes:**

You have to be offered posttreatment for at least one year after you're drug-free, so you can empty your thoughts about everything that happens, get advice and tips and have someone who listens.

In treatment, you get to work on what's difficult in life, but to be able to live drug-free, you have to work on yourself.

You have to set realistic goals, both long-term and short-term, and have someone safe around you to lean on.

Create the goals together with me and in good time before the treatment is finished, then there will be a plan for me that feels good.

I screwed up because I thought I was finished, but when I came out, I started abusing drugs again after a short time.

I was very surprised when I came out of treatment that it was difficult to stay away from drugs, for me it was a bit of a shock because I felt ready when I left.

You have to do the work yourself, but you have to have people who can support you and help you become who you want to be.

We've been given up on many times, but what we actually need is someone who doesn't give up on us and says they care about us.

## **ADVICE 2:**

### **A safe community to come to**

It is important for us to have a place to come to. A community where we feel safe and where we feel that we are always welcome. It is important for us to be able to have a place to go to when we feel alone or have a hard time, where we will feel accepted and not judged. Where you can be yourself and arrive with ease. For it to feel safe, it has to be a place where you don't need appointments to come. Then we can go there if it suddenly hurts extra, or where the crave feels extra strong. We also need help to build up a new and drug-free network. When we are out of the abuse and finished with the treatment, we are alone and need help to build up a network.

### **Quotes:**

We need a place where it feels like home, where it feels safe. A community you can come with ease. Where there's no facade.

A place you can come to without an appointment and where you can talk about things that bother you without being judged for it.

Or you can just sit there without talking. The feeling of being accepted is fantastic.

I had nothing to go to after treatment and then it didn't work, so I went back to the network I had before and started abusing drugs again. It's important that you can build a positive network when you're drug-free.

An important part of the time after treatment is to have a network, or work towards building a new and drug-free network.

Someone needs to help us find drug-free friends. It's hard to find new friends, and even harder to cut ties with people you already have in your life just because they use drugs. It'll be like pressing a "reset" button on life, and you need both help and support for that.

We have to have a drug-free network. If you sit there and everyone you know abuses drugs, it becomes difficult. I became sad. It feels pointless to have nothing to go to. Then you feel a craving for drugs, and you start playing with the idea. It tends to escalate then.



# CHANGEFACTORY

## KNOWLEDGE CENTRE

### **Why knowledge directly from children?**

Children and young people have to feel that the school, kindergarten, support services, police and legal system are safe and useful for them. Children and young people all over Norway have experiences from meeting these systems and advice on how they can be the best possible. Authorities, professionals and students often lack this knowledge from children and young people, when frameworks and what constitutes good practice are to be determined, nationally and locally. Therefore, it must be brought in to a much greater extent and, together with other knowledge, be part of the knowledge base, in order to develop and ensure the quality of good systems for children and young people.

### **More than 10 years of collecting knowledge**

For more than 10 years, Changefactory (CF) has systematically collected experiences and advice from children and young people about how they experience school, kindergarten, support services, the police and the legal system. In 2017, the Prime Minister opened Changefactory Knowledge Centre, to collect knowledge from children and young people about the public systems. As far as we know, there are few knowledge centres in Europe whose main purpose is to gather and disseminate knowledge directly from children and young people about the systems they are in. CF seeks collaboration with similar organisations.

### **Participatory and practice-oriented method**

In order to collect, systematise and disseminate summarised experiences and advice from children and young people, a participatory and practice-oriented method is used. CF has called it the Changemethod. The Changemethod has been developed in close collaboration with children and young people. It greatly

considers that children have the right to express their opinion, in ways that feel safe for them. The method consists of process descriptions and tools that help many diverse children and young people to participate. It's based closely on a participatory method used in action research, called Participatory Learning and Action (PLA).

### **Safety is most important**

The experiences and advice are collected directly from children and young people in sessions or interviews. The sessions are organised with an emphasis on ensuring that they are experienced as safely as possible for the children and young people who participate. The adults who facilitate are, among other things, trained by children to meet children and young people with openness and human warmth. This is based on the main findings from children about what adults have to be like, in order for children to be able to tell honestly.

### **Experiences and advice are summarised**

Experiences and advice from the sessions are documented in transcripts and other written and visual documentation. The data is summarised and systematised. No links are made to theory. Experiences and advice that are repeated by many children and young people in many places in the country, become the main answers. We call this knowledge directly from children.

### **Children and young people present**

The knowledge from children is presented in reports, films, podcasts, books and online. Participants in the qualitative surveys can also be invited, as pros, in communication and professional development. The pros present knowledge directly from children to politicians, national authorities, professionals and students.



Rådet for psykisk helse

Prosjektet er støttet av  
ExtraStiftelsen Helse og  
Rehabilitering med Extra-midler



# WISDOM ABOUT DRUG ABUSE

We are young people who have abused drugs. We have experienced first-hand what it is like to be met by the help services, for better or for worse. And we have a lot of knowledge about what causes us to escape into drugs, and what it takes for us to get out of drug abuse.



CHANGE FACTORY