



# Substance Misuse Service

## Let's Speak About Drugs

### Episode 4

#### Dealing & Interventions

00:00

**PAUL:**

Young Hackney Substance Misuse Service is a service for young people between the ages of six and 25.

Our aims are to help prevent first use amongst young people, to delay first use amongst young people, and to provide harm reduction information and advice when needed.

00:18

[music]

00:25

**DUPE:**

Okay, I got one. I got one.

I used to work in a shoe recycling shop.

It was sole-destroying.

00:33

[silence]

00:35

**DUPE:**

Okay, good, good.

00:37

[sad trombone noise]

00:40

**TONY:**

Can I tell a joke? It's somewhat of an original. No, here we go. Paul, brace yourself.

00:45

**PAUL:**

Okay.

00:46

**TONY:**

One One was a racehorse. Two Two was one too. One One won a race one day, Two Two won one too.

00:56

**DUPE:**

I'm tryna crack the code on that one.

00:59

**PAUL:**

You know what? It's a good job of recording this because I can listen back to it later on.

01:02

[indistinct]

01:06

**DUPE:**

Two Two won one too. It's like, yeah, yeah, one two. I get it.

01:13

**TONY:**

It's a bit cerebral. We could maybe not use it, but hey.

01:18

**DUPE:**

Okay. Welcome to another episode of Let's Speak About Drugs, a Young Hackney Substance Misuse Service podcast. I am one of your hosts, Dupe. And with me is...

01:33

**PAUL:**

Paul Hira, Young Hackney's Substance Misuse Treatment Worker.

01:36

**DUPE:**

And we have today a special guest. He goes by the name...

01:41

**TONY:**

Tony Bravo, Dealing Intervention Worker.

01:43

**DUPE:**

Lovely to have you here, Tony.

01:45

**TONY:**

Great to be here. It's fun.

01:47

**DUPE:**

As per usual, the segment coming up is what we like to call the Mythbuster.

Time for the Mythbuster section.

01:54

[music]

01:57

**DUPE:**

In this segment, I dispel a common myth in, in this case, the drug dealing world.

So the myth is, once you become a drug dealer, you live a lavish lifestyle: you have the cars, a lot of money, big house.

In reality, this lifestyle is usually short-lived. The full consequences usually catch up to you, and the lifestyle is no longer at your disposal, i.e., you're probably going to end up in prison, or you might end up dead. Would I be right in saying that?

02:32

**TONY:**

Pretty much.

02:33

**DUPE:**

Cool.

Now, we move on to our topic of the day. At this point, I hand you over to our guest, Tony.

02:42

**TONY:**

Thanks, guys.

Drug dealing, yes, there are trappings of wealth, you can make money, we're not gonna lie.

You see people balling, what I mean balling, they're on the grind, they're selling drugs, they're working, they're making a lot of money, seems really cool. It's fashionable, it's hip.

There are a lot of people to sort of look up to and identify with. But the sad truth is that for the vast, vast majority of young people who think it's a good idea to sell drugs, the

consequences are long lasting. It's not just that you might get arrested, it's not that you're going to have police trampling up and down inside your house, giving your mum palpitations and causing your dog to lose its hair and whatnot, goldfish will stop swimming and stuff like that. It's the fact of a loss of opportunities, really, I think is the saddest thing.

Young people who seem to identify with drug dealing as being something that's worth their time or something to aspire to, they tend to be taking their eye off the other significant ball,

which is their education and their advancement in life. And I just feel that a lot of our young people are distracted from embarking on a life that should be very exciting. I mean, you're laying the foundations for the whole of your life. So education is very important. Your first job is very important, and building on those experiences. And those landmarks should be very, very pivotal to your future.

What tends to happen is young people compromise their own abilities, chasing something that really has no fulfillment for them. And that, I guess, is the saddest thing.

Also, you're sort of involving yourself in drugs, substances, which once you come into contact with, if you so happen to sort of start using these substances, they could stick around for a little while as habits.

And there's financial implications, there's mental health implications, and of course, the loss of your liberty. So I think the saddest thing about drug dealing is that it's a major distraction for young people for the path they should be travelling down, but instead, they're navigating all these other things. And as you said earlier on, it could end up ultimately in death.

The thing with drug dealing, I think it's the effort you put into trying to be a drug dealer, those skills or what's required to do that. Those are what we call transferable skills. And they're characteristics that once you sort of employ it or put it into legitimate work, would be very good for you. You've got to have a work ethic, you've got to be conscious of your stock, you've got to be good with numbers, you've got to be reliable, you've got to be timely. These are all transferable skills that work very well, in the legitimate sphere of work.

Also, on top of that, I was just talking merely about the individual involved. There's also an impact on your family, your younger brother, your younger sisters who are looking up to you. They're possibly going to compromise themselves by looking up to you and trying to be like you.

There's also issues of gang activity and negative peer associations that would grab you - not even lead you but grab you - by the nose and drag you down a road that you don't really want to go down, essentially. And I've spoken to many former drug dealers in their 20s, early 30s. And without exception, every single one of them says, 'I wish it didn't go like that for me.' And these are guys that had money, they had jewellery, they had the phones, they had the hats, they had the sneakers, the trainers. They had all of the trappings, but the realness wasn't there.

Drug dealers tend to not be able to buy a house. People who work for British Rail, people who become managers in Tesco's, these are the people that tend to get mortgages to buy houses. So it's impacting on your social standing in the community.

If you're known as a drug dealer, you're sort of lauded and praised by your negative peers. But when you get up into your 20s, those guys are nowhere, particularly if you go to jail. You're on your own. There isn't this support network there. It's gone.

So I just think that the impact of selling drugs on the community, the individual, the family, it's a complete waste. And to me, I would use the word 'destructive.' I would actually use that word, because we've got a generation of young people who are aspiring to selling drugs, rather than a generation of people saying, 'I want to aspire to be a doctor, a lawyer, an architect.' Those are real, meaningful, aspirational targets.

Young people who aspire to be drug dealers regard education, as, and I quote, 'a myth.'

07:37

**PAUL:**

So would you be seeing some of these young people that you've alluded to not accessing mainstream services or not going to school, or are these some of these people that have

been sold the dream of selling a bit of weed or selling a bit of white powder or something that in order to make them some money, would you see these people as people dropping out of the normal systems or something like that?

08:10

**TONY:**

Definitely. Remember, these are young people who would not, for example, I'll give you an example. These are young people who would regard any sort of interfering or messing around with their private parts in any degree, they would regard it as a complete no-no, a complete taboo. But we have young people summarily and quite regularly depositing substances in parts of their body that maybe it's too early to discuss the exact geography, but they're secreting drugs in orifices in their body, but it's quite amazing how fast the young person will sort of almost sell their soul to the devil in order to chase this dream.

It's a bit like you wouldn't necessarily go and stab somebody, but you buy into this notion of us and them. So it becomes almost second nature, it almost becomes expected of you. And the last time I went to a Young Offenders Institute, it was full. No vacancies. It was full to the brim.

The most heartbreaking thing of all, though, fellas, is when a young person, 16, 15 - 16, and you're trying to let them see your vision of the future and you're saying to them, 'well, when you turn 18 you'll be on that ladder to reach adulthood and you'll be able to do...' and they'll interrupt me and say a couple of times, 'I'd be lucky to make it to 18' and this is the thinking of some young people. It's very fatalistic, like, 'this life is what's been given to me and there's no other option.' And it is literally heartbreaking.

I'm a father myself, and you could point to a lot of things that would, as attributing to that way of thinking. I've heard it said that 'a father does not teach his son how to be a man, the son learns to be a man from his peers.' So if his peers have negative ambitions or negative aspirations, that's what will really influence this young person.

Now that's not to say all young people in the hood, quote, unquote, are going to be drawn that way. And I think we don't place enough emphasis on the outstanding success stories that we do have, where young people have managed to extricate themselves from gang life, have managed to not go down the path of selling drugs. And to be fair to you, the pull is quite strong that if you get them young enough, and they sort of come to one of us as drug workers, it's enough to sort of realign them back on the path to which the more positive expectations are there for these young people.

And I think with young people, especially inner city young people, the expectation is very negative. I think the demographic expectation, racial expectations is that if you're a member of a particular group, the expectation for you is very low. Whereas for other groups, the expectation is very high. And I think young people buy into that straight away.

A relationship with the police might be negative, and it also sort of follows that your relationship with law and order is also negative, so you don't think twice about breaking the law and going down that path as well.

So the causes of young people's involvement in drugs, it's many, it's complicated, it's complex. Meanwhile, we have a relatively wealthy demographic who are providing the demand for substances. And I think we have too much conversation on young people being the perpetrators of crime, and not focusing on the people who are actually using these substances and creating the demand that these young people feel that there's a necessity or even something that's beneficial for them in selling drugs.

12:08

**PAUL:**

So you're saying if we cut the demand, the supply will be less?

12:13

**TONY:**

I think that follows because I think especially with the explosion of county lines activities, we've got pockets of drugs activities springing up wherever. If there's a pocket where there isn't drugs activity, that's almost like virgin territory for county lines gangs to sort of exploit. So you're left thinking, well, if there's ever increase in the landscape, in terms of carving out territory, then this sure is a lot of people out there who's using Class A drugs.

Let's make the distinction as well between the drugs that are being sold, or the demand is Class A drugs, primarily cocaine and heroin, crack. And those opiates, big demand for those. And young people have already deduced that it's far more lucrative to sell brown and white - heroin and cocaine - than there is for weed. And as an adage, a young person said to me one time many years ago, I'll never forget it, he said, 'we smoke the green, but we sell the brown and white.'

Lean now - codeine mixed with fruit juice. Because it's popular, and it's topical, and it's contemporary in terms of the hip hop industry, young people are quite familiar with it. They might not have tried it, but you can bet it's on their list of to dos.

13:26

**DUPE:**

Yeah, thanks. Thanks, Tony. That was very insightful. And I'm sure the young people listening have learned a thing or two.

So this is the point where we move on to our question and answer section.

So I'd like to introduce our young person for this week, as she goes by the name Liana.

13:43

**LIANA:**

Hello.

13:44

**DUPE:**

Hey, how you doing?

13:45

**LIANA:**

Fine. All right.

13:48

**DUPE:**

Cool. Good, good, good. Well, this is the part where you get to ask questions. So ask away.

13:56

**LIANA:**

Would offences for dealing be wiped when you're 18?

14:00

**TONY:**

That's a good question. The way to look at under 18 offending is that the difference isn't too serious. It's almost like if you compare something that was written in pencil and something that's written in ink.

A lot of offences that young people commit under the age of 18, as long as they're not too serious, and you don't go to jail, they tend to sort of fade away somewhat. But if you're incarcerated, or go to jail, it will have some impact, because you will have to notify. Some colleges want to know if you've been sent to jail and your first employers, they'll want to know what kind of young person they have in their midst.

Did I answer your question?

14:40

**LIANA:**

Yeah, that's good.

What's the difference between you getting done for possession and you getting done for dealing? How much would you have to have on you in terms of weight?

14:51

**TONY:**

The maximum sentence for drug offences in this country is... Can you guess?

Digga digga digga digga digga digga digga digga digga digga digga...

15:01

**LIANA and DUPE:**

[indistinct]

15:04

**PAUL:**

Are you doing your own sound effects as well?

15:07

**DUPE:**

Yeah, I don't need to add any sound effects to this.

15:12

**PAUL:**

I was wondering what was going on. But yeah, what are their sentences?

15:19

**TONY:**

So the maximum sentence for drug offences in this country is life. That's for a significant amount of Class A drugs. For example, three men were caught in a boat in Southampton some time ago. They had £30,000,000 worth of cocaine on the boat. One man got 27 years, one man got 23 years, one man got 22 years.

Now, obviously, if the police find you and catch you selling or buying a bag of weed for someone and giving it to someone else, which is technically supplying, I don't think you're going to be facing a life sentence. But basically, it's going to be...

[The] Maximum sentence for possession of a Class A drug is 14 years for Class A drugs, right? Class B drugs, it sort of slides down the scale a little bit. But it all depends on what the drug is, how much of the drug you have, and your previous history.

So if you've got about four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, 10 drug offences beforehand, then the judge will have no mercy on you and he will put you away. Typically, it's rare that you're gonna get the maximum sentence if you own up and say 'it's mine.' 'Yes, I don't want to go to court' and all this kind of stuff.

If you're, shall we say, helpful to the police, the sentence is reduced more and more.

16:42

**LIANA:**

Is it more likely to get corrupted and if you refuse to do it through Snapchat? Is it more likely to get clocked like that? Or in the act, if you're just out in the street doing it?

It's a complicated question, isn't it?

16:55

**PAUL:**

Well, it's a valid question. Are you more likely to be clocked by the Feds, you're saying, by the police, if you're out on the street selling drugs? Or are you more likely to get exposed and clocked if you're selling it through social media? That's what you're asking?

17:09

**LIANA:**

Yeah, yeah, yeah.

17:11

**TONY:**

I think they used to say something back in the day. I don't know if you remember, help me, Paul, when they used to say 'possession is nine tenths of the law.'

Do you remember that one?

17:18

**PAUL:**

Yes.

17:18

**TONY:**

If a policeman stops you and manages to go through your phone, and he can see drug dealing activity, all that's gonna do is give him a notion that there is something here worthy of further investigation.

So he might detain you on the grounds that he suspects that you're selling drugs, and then he'll... What'll he wanna do? He want to search you. If he finds nothing there, and he's still sort of interested in you, he might have the right to go to your house, to see what's in your house to substantiate his suspicion that you're selling drugs.

If he sees you out in the road doing a drug deal, it's an easier case to make.



18:01

**DUPE:**

All right, cool. Thanks for those questions, Liana.

Now, can everyone see what I've got in my hand over here? It's the Advice Box.

18:10

[cheers]

18:14

**DUPE:**

In this segment, we share advice, resources and tools that might help our listeners at home.

Any advice for the listeners out there?

18:24

**TONY:**

The decisions you make today is going to affect the lives of your children. If you want to sell drugs, get trapped in this web that keeps you in the hood, when your kids grow in the hood, what kind of choices are they gonna have? They're gonna have the same choices as you and probably make the same decisions.

Young people do want to work, young people want to... If it was easier for them to work by providing employment for young people, that will be a start. It will be a start to provide role models for young people, they could apply it to people in their community, rather than the boys rolling past on rentals with the big Rolexes and the big hats. Three months later, they're in jail.

I think the tool you were referring to, Paul, was the 'Is It Worth It?' tool where we talk about [a] young person who sold drugs for a couple of months, made about five grand, and then he went through the system of going to court, ID parades, police stations, he went to jail, he came out on licence, had to go probation. And all that time and for that year, we took that £5000, and we averaged it out over the year to work out that he had only made, per day, something like £13 per day. Whereas working in retail, working in a garage, tends to pay you more money per day, tends to provide more security. You're not gonna have gangbangers running up on you. You're not gonna have drug users trying to rob you, rival drug dealers trying to rob you.

So, in the long run, it's about trying to make young people see the greater picture or in the long run, it's better to do the legitimate work rather than the illegal work, because illegal work is just too much hard work. I don't know about you guys, but I don't like jail. I don't like courts. I don't like police stations. That's just me. It's a preference I have.

20:31

**PAUL:**

Same.

20:32

**TONY:**

I've never done illegal activities like that. Selling drugs? That's crazy to me as an individual, so I've always gone the legitimate way.

But for young people, they're sort of guided by peer influences. And if it's okay for Jack, and Tom and Harry, then I should be aspiring towards that as well. It's about interjecting and sort

of putting an intervention in place that undermines that way of thinking. Then again, it's not very easy for a young person to not follow the crowd. That's really hard. And the only way you can counter that is by showing young people the value they have within themselves. And this comes down to a psychological thing, where society might have low expectations for you, but damn it, I believe in you.

21:21

[laughter]

21:23

**DUPE:**

And now we're gonna close the Advice Box.

21:25

[disappointed sounds]

21:27

**DUPE:**

This brings us on to the next segment, which is the requests.

21:31

[voice echoes]

[music]

21:35

**DUPE:**

We just want to say if you do want to ask questions, if you have any requests, you can do that. And how you do that is by sending a message either to our Twitter, which is...

21:47

**PAUL:**

@YoungHackney.

21:49

**DUPE:**

You can also email us...

21:51

**LIANA:**

via email at [yhsms@hackney.gov.uk](mailto:yhsms@hackney.gov.uk).

21:57

**DUPE:**

You can text us on our text number which is 07814 183052.

And you can call us on our duty line...

22:11

**LIANA:**

[0208 356 7377]

22:14

**DUPE:**

From 9am to 9pm, Monday to Friday.

All right, guys, it's unfortunate but this is the part of the show that I hate the most.

Oh, why? This is because this is the end of today's episode. It's goodbye from me, Dupe.

22:34

**PAUL:**

It's goodbye from me, Paul.

22:36

**LIANA:**

Bye from Liana.

22:38

**TONY:**

And it's a very pleasurable goodbye from me.

No, seriously, it was great fun, you guys. Thanks for having me.

22:47

**DUPE:**

Nah, it was a pleasure.

Thanks for coming on. And yeah, we'll see you on another episode of Let's Speak About Drugs.

22:55

[music]