

# Hastings & St Leonards Community Consultation: Summer 2022

Between 4 July and 23 August an online consultation was run to gather thoughts from people living and working in the Hastings and St Leonards about illegal drug use in the area. To raise awareness and encourage people to complete the survey, we used a variety of channels to promote the web link including the following:

* Printed posters displayed across Hastings town centre
* Flyers distributed to local businesses, shops, people passing by coordinated by our Community Development Officers
* Organic and paid for social media advertising
* Digital banners displayed on the Sussex World website (specifically pages relating to Hastings) as well as ‘off site’ banners which targeted people who live in Hastings who browsed the internet
* A message was included in the My Hastings Matters newsletter which generated 43 clicks to the survey web page

420 responses were received from a range of individuals, including those in recovery and their friends and family, local business owners, and people working in treatment and recovery services, as well as those who live and work locally.

This document summarises what people told us.

## Do you have any experience of illegal drug use?

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| I have experience of illegal drug use myself | 23.10% |
| I have experience of using drug treatment and recovery services | 2.38% |
| Someone I know has experienced illegal drug use | 34.52% |
| Someone I know has used drug treatment and recovery services | 18.57% |
| Prefer not to say | 2.38% |

Just over half of people completing the survey told us they had experience of drug use, either personally or through someone they know. 18 individuals said it was through their work in treatment and recovery services, healthcare, and education.

97 respondents told us they had experience of illegal drug use themselves, but only eight of them said they had experience of using treatment and recovery services.

## How would you respond to someone who asked for help with their drug use?

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Direct them to a drug treatment service | 21.08% |
| Refer them to the East Sussex County Council or Hastings Borough Council website | 4.41% |
| Refer them to their GP | 29.66% |
| Search the internet to find a treatment service | 28.92% |
| I wouldn’t know what to do | 11.52% |
| Other | 4.41% |

One fifth of respondents said they would refer someone who came to them for help to a drug treatment service, with 43 people saying they would refer them to CGL. Just under 10% would find out more specifics about the issue to ascertain the best place to signpost to.

There were a wide range of other services mentioned, including Project ADDER, Seaview, East Sussex Recovery Alliance (ESRA), Adfam, Oasis, and Hastings Voluntary Action (HVA), as well as some awareness of national organisations such as Narcotics Anonymous (NA), Cocaine Anonymous (CA), Addaction, Talk to Frank. While a range of services were mentioned, it was by a small proportion of respondents.

## How much of a problem is illegal drug use in Hastings and St Leonards

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| A serious problem | 60.14% |
| A problem | 27.21% |
| Not much of a problem | 2.39% |
| Not a problem at all | 0% |
| Unsure | 10.26% |

## To what extent does illegal drug use in Hastings and St Leonards affect you

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Affects me a lot | 26.02% |
| Affects me a little | 39.04% |
| Doesn't affect me much | 19.04% |
| Doesn’t affect me at all | 7.95% |
| Unsure | 7.95% |

The main reason people told us that illegal substance use was a problem in the town was in the visibility of the issue; predominantly dealing and use happening in the open, groups congregating in public areas, and drug related litter. Other concerns were about cannabis use in public being widespread and having become ‘accepted’.

Respondents said they were affected by drug use because they had friends and family who use or had used substances in a problematic way. Others told us they were concerned about young people getting involved with illegal drugs.

Another theme running through responses was feeling unsafe or avoiding certain areas of town. Many people reported the impact on their home life of having drug dealers living and dealing in the vicinity of their homes, and the smell of cannabis affecting their enjoyment of using their garden or having windows open. Others expressed sympathy towards those struggling with addiction.

## What do you think are the main issues associated with illegal drug use in Hastings and St Leonards

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| There aren’t any issues | 1.67% |
| How safe I feel while out and about during the day | 36.43% |
| How safe I feel while out and about at night | 58.10% |
| Drug related paraphernalia eg needles in public spaces | 59.05% |
| Groups of people congregating in public | 65.00% |

## Where do you think are the key hotspots related to problem drug use?

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Hastings town centre | 72.62% |
| Hastings Old Town | 22.38% |
| Hastings seafront | 37.14% |
| St Leonards seafront | 47.38% |
| Central St Leonards | 59.29% |
| None, there aren't any particular hotspots | 6.19% |

The Broomgrove, Hollington, West Hill and Ore areas were additionally identified as hotspots.

One of the key issues identified was the impact problematic substance use has on the individuals using. Respondents told us other issues are the crime, anti-social behaviour, and aggressive begging associated with illegal substance use, and also the impact of the problem on young people living in the town.

Respondents strongly felt that policing was key to tackling illegal drugs and associated issues, this included more resources, more visible policing, and tougher penalties for dealers. While tackling dealers and supply chains was thought to be key, there was a theme that those struggling with problematic substance use shouldn’t necessarily be criminalised for this, instead there should be safe places for people to go.

Education was felt to be important across the board; in schools, for the general public in terms of where to signpost people for help as well as reducing the stigma around drug use, and for people looking for help for themselves.

## Demographics – who responded?

Of the 420 survey respondents, 411 (97.8%) completed the age and gender questions of the survey. The largest group (29.27%) were females aged between 45 and 59. Results of the 2021 census show this group comprise 14.23% of the wider Hastings population.

All of the people who said they lived in Hastings or St Leonards told us which ward they resided in. The Central St Leonards ward was highly represented, with residents comprising 11.72% of those who live in the town and completed the survey.

## Gender

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Female | 63.99% |
| Male | 32.60% |
| Non-binary | 0.73% |
| I define in another way | 0% |
| Prefer not to say | 2.68% |

## Age

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| 18-24 | 0.97% |
| 25-34 | 7.06% |
| 35-44 | 13.38% |
| 45-54 | 23.11% |
| 55-59 | 17.76% |
| 60-64 | 12.41% |
| 65-74 | 16.79% |
| 75+ | 4.38% |
| Prefer not to say | 4.14% |

## Wards of those living in Hastings and St Leonards

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Ashdown | 5.21% |
| Baird | 2.86% |
| Braybrooke | 6.25% |
| Castle | 8.33% |
| Central St Leonards | 11.72% |
| Conquest | 3.13% |
| Gensing | 4.69% |
| Hollington | 5.47% |
| Maze Hill | 3.65% |
| Old Hastings | 9.38% |
| Ore | 10.68% |
| Silverhill | 10.42% |
| St Helens | 4.43% |
| Tressell | 4.69% |
| West St Leonards | 6.25% |
| Wishing Tree | 2.86% |