



Epping Forest Youth Council

Drugs Project Report 2019



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Introduction

The project was agreed following a consultation with 80 secondary school pupils at the 2017 youth conference and the Youth Councillors debated the topic at an Epping Forest Youth Council meeting. They agreed that some young people were taking drugs and that drugs were easily accessible locally, online and in schools. There was concern about the misuse of nitrous oxide (NO₂)¹ and the effect it had on the community and environment. Nitrous oxide gas canisters are easily purchased online and although illegal for under 18s to purchase, no proof of age checks are required for online shopping.



The drugs project included a pupil survey, drug awareness poster campaign and a clean-up day.

¹ Nitrous oxide is also referred to as NO₂, balloons, laughing gas and as a 'legal high'.

Background

To set the scene, the threat posed by the misuse of psychoactive substances² has forced the government to launch a ban on these substances under the Psychoactive Substances Act 2016. As a result, deaths associated with these drugs have fallen. As we look at our local findings, there is a new trend emerging in the consumption of nitrous oxide specifically.



The Home Office has found it to be the second most popular recreational drug among 16 to 24-year olds in England and Wales. Nitrous oxide is not a controlled drug, and it has legitimate uses in the food industry, medicine and dentistry. Under the Intoxicating Substances

Supply Act 1985 it is illegal to sell to under 18s when the seller believes the substance may be inhaled for the purposes of intoxication. While it is not illegal for an adult to inhale the gas, many authorities across Britain are concerned about its use.

What we accomplished

Epping Forest Youth Councillors consulted with 3177 school pupils that they represent and they also received concerned reports from the adult Councillors and their constituents about drug taking amongst young people. The impact on the community and environment caused by the drug taking and discarded NO₂ canisters, were identified as major concerns facing people who live in the Epping Forest district. In response to this the Youth Council set up 3 sub-projects to address the issue.

3177
SCHOOL PUPILS
CONSULTED

² New psychoactive substances – often incorrectly called legal highs – contain one or more chemical substances which produce similar effects to illegal drugs (like cocaine, cannabis and ecstasy). <https://www.talktofrank.com/drug/new-psychoactive-substances>

Clean up of nitrous oxide canisters day

The Youth Councillors organised an environmental clean-up day in conjunction with the Waste Management Team at Epping Forest District Council and the City of London Forest Wardens. Three hotspot areas were identified as being frequented regularly by people taking drugs; Holy Innocents Church car park in Epping Forest, Traps Hill car park in Loughton and Corn Mill Lane car park in Waltham Abbey.

In three hours the Youth Councillors collected over 550 NO₂ canisters and other waste associated with cannabis and alcohol. The worst area was the secluded corner in the Traps Hill car park, where a bulk of their findings were located. They produced a short documentary film with the Public Relations team explaining their concerns about the substance misuse amongst the young people and young adults. The film was sent to secondary schools in the district to raise awareness of the growing issue.



You can view the short documentary film at:
www.youtube.com/watch?v=kv-VIGvEUMc



Drug awareness poster campaign

The Youth Councillors attended drug awareness training by various professionals; they learnt about the increasing use of NO₂ amongst young people, the effects it had on the wider community, the impact on crime and the dangers to health (which sometimes even result in death). The canisters are often discarded and not disposed of correctly, thus impacting on the levels of litter the district council collects. According to the Environment Agency, NO₂ does not have a local environmental impact but on a global scale it contributes to global warming and is the third most important greenhouse gas in the UK. Although relatively small amounts are released, it has a high "global warming potential" (310 times that of carbon dioxide). Nitrous oxide also damages the ozone layer, thus reducing the protection offered from harmful UV sun rays.

The anaesthetic and analgesic properties of nitrous oxide have been used in medicine and dentistry since the late nineteenth century, when it was also used as a recreational drug. Now, it is used in the dairy industry as a mixing and foaming agent, in motor sports to speed engines and by deep sea divers to avoid nitrogen narcosis.

The Youth Councillors agreed that although drug education was being taught to those in Year 9 through the Epping Forest District Council's Communities team programme 'Reality





The design of the bus poster was created by Youth Councillor Annabelle Yaman called 'Don't Open the Gate to Gateway Drugs' and was stuck to the back of Arriva buses.

Roadshow', very little drug awareness education was being delivered to other year groups. Therefore, they agreed on getting the message across visually via a poster campaign entitled 'Don't Open the Gate to Gateway Drugs' to raise awareness of the dangers of taking gateway drugs. NO₂ was included in this broad category.

To maximise promotion of the poster campaign it was agreed to display an advert on the rear of five Arriva buses travelling across the county, passing through Buckhurst Hill, Loughton, Debden, Epping Forest, St. Margaret's, Upshire and Waltham Abbey for 3 months from August until October.



Youth Councillor Stanimir Bakalov said: "The amount of canisters we found whilst out and about is worrying and it shows 'laughing gas' is a real issue for young people today. "Through our drug awareness project we hope to highlight the risks and make young people aware of the damage they are doing."

Anonymous survey

A major part of the project was conducting an anonymous drugs survey. The target audience was pupils attending the nine Epping Forest district secondary schools and Epping Forest College students. 3177 pupils completed the survey and the full findings will be available upon request and to youth and community service providers.



Epping Forest Drugs Survey – how we collected the data

The Epping Forest Youth Councillors identified nine questions they wanted answers to (see appendix A).

Q1. Gender

Q2. Location, where did they live in the district?

Q3. Did they perceive drugs as an issue in their area?

Q4. Did they think drugs were easily available to young people?

Q5. Where were drugs available from?

Q6. Had they tried drugs?

Q7. Which drugs had they tried?

Q8. What made them want to try drugs?

Q9. Finally if they were offered drugs how confident were they to say no?

The data collected did not require any personal details other than gender, age and hometown. Surveys were anonymous to protect the identity of individuals and to encourage the pupils to participate. Data was not collected by Ward but by school; the nine secondary schools in the district cover eight wards. A total of the findings appears under 'All Wards'.

The data will appear as:

All EFD Schools

Braeside School
Chigwell School & West Hatch High School
Epping St Johns School
Debden Park High & Davenant Foundation
Epping Forest College
Roding Valley High School
The Ongar Academy
King Harold Business & Enterprise Academy

All Wards

Buckhurst Hill West Ward
Chigwell Village Ward
Epping Lindsey & Thornwood Common
Loughton Alderton Ward
Loughton Broadway Ward
Loughton St Mary's Ward
Shelley Ward
Waltham Abbey North East Ward

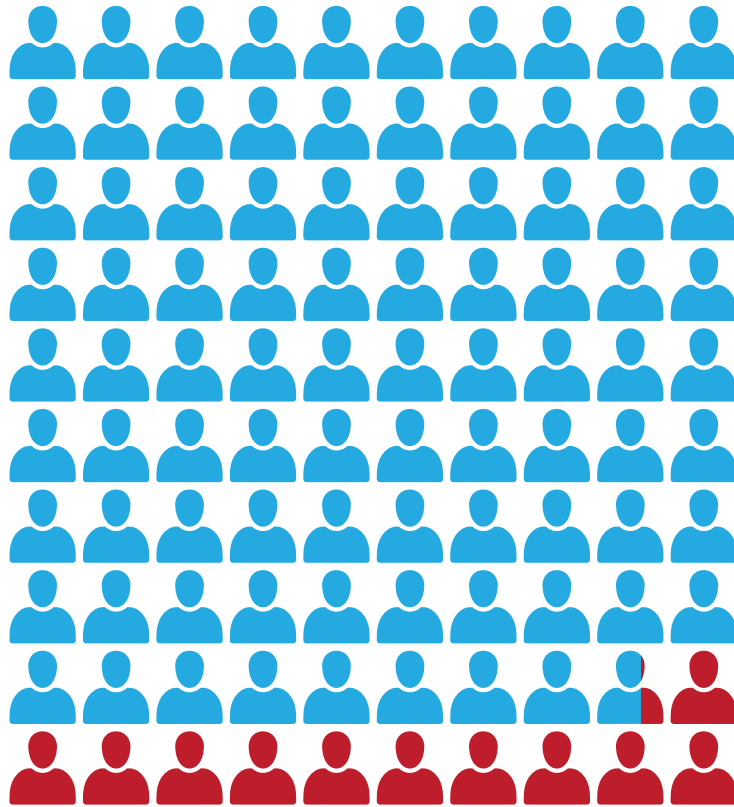
It is envisaged to provide schools with individual data relevant to their school but it will not be available to all schools.

The findings

Nationally, drug related deaths in the UK rose to their highest point in 2017. Reassuringly most young people in the Epping Forest District are not taking drugs. Of the 3177 participants surveyed, 2818 had not tried drugs and 359 had said they had tried drugs.

88.7%

have not tried drugs



11.3%

 said they had tried drugs

The 11.3% that have taken drugs in Epping Forest is far below the national average of 24% of pupils taken drugs. (Source 'NHS smoking, drinking and drug use among young people - England 2016')

The survey questions

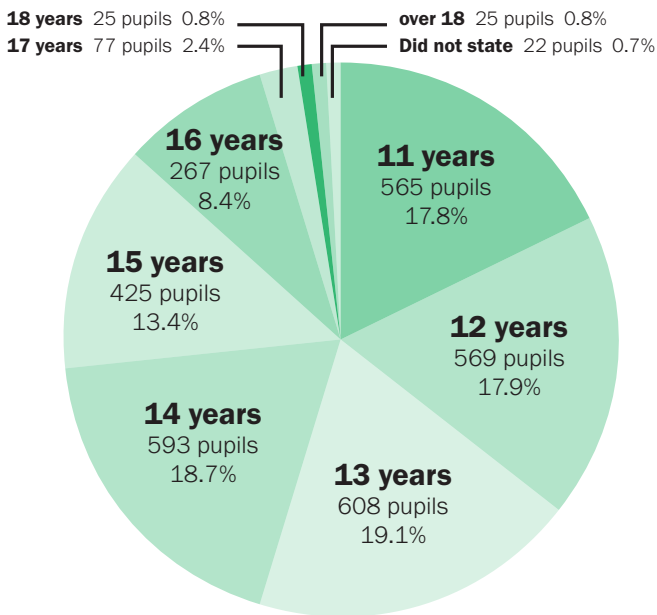
Question 1: We asked pupils... their gender

Of those surveyed 54.9% (1744) were girls and 45% (1431) were boys. 0.1% (2) did not state their gender.

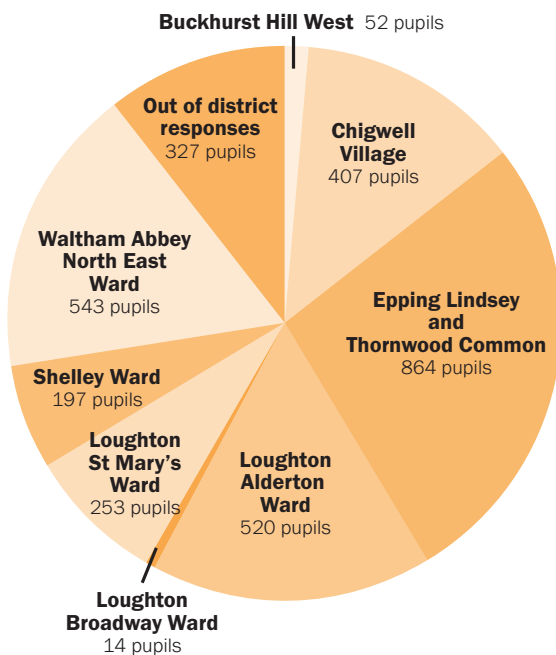


54.9% girls
45% boys

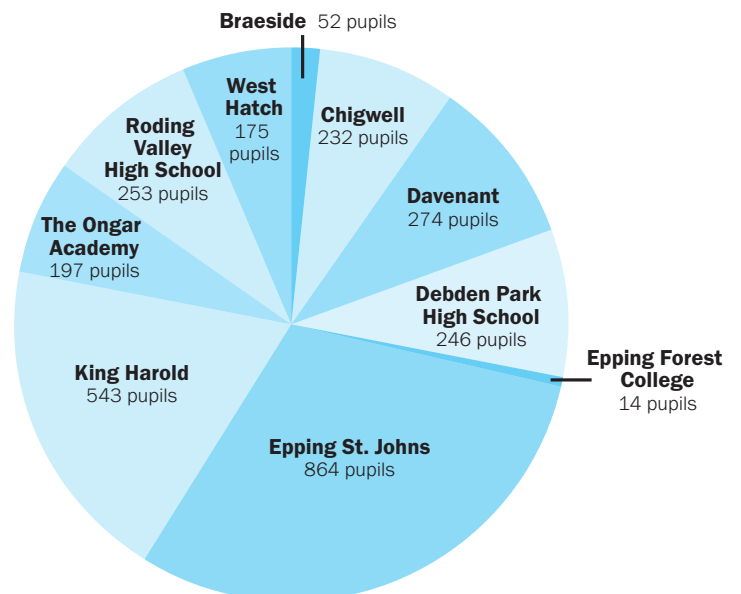
Breakdown by age



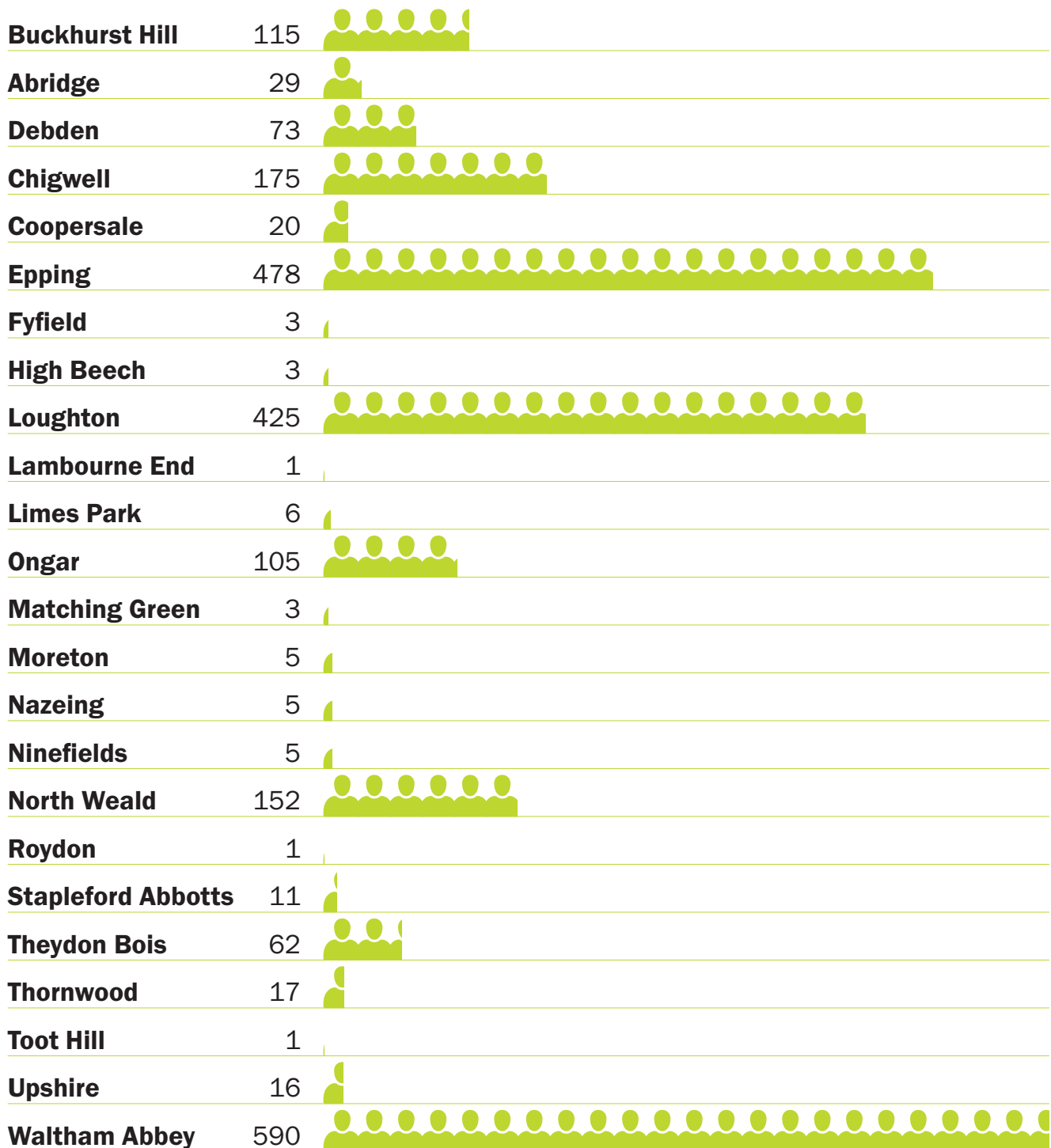
Ward by ward breakdown



Breakdown by school



Question 2: We asked pupils... where do you live?



A total of 3233 surveys were received but 56 were rejected as the forms were spoilt, the remaining **3177** forms consisted of 2301 pupils living in the district and 876 pupils living outside the district but attending schools in the district.

Question 3: We asked pupils... are drugs an issue in your area?

Youth Councillors felt it important to ask if young people perceived drug taking as an issue in their area. 'Their area' meant either where they live and/or in their school/ college.

Of the 3177 surveyed (including out of district responses), 48% (1524) said YES and 52% (1652) said NO. One person did not answer.



Ward by ward breakdown	YES	NO
Buckhurst Hill West:	19 (36.5%)	33 (63.5%)
Chigwell Village:	176 (43.2%)	231 (56.8%)
Epping Lindsey & Thornwood Common:	373 (43.2%)	491 (56.8%)
Loughton Alderton Ward:	218 (42%)	302 (58%)
Loughton Broadway Ward:	4 (28.6%)	10 (71.4%)
Loughton St Mary's Ward:	124 (49%)	129 (51%)
Shelley Ward:	55 (27.9%)	142 (72.1%)
Waltham Abbey North East Ward:	364 (67.0%)	179 (33%)

Question 4: We asked pupils... do you think drugs are easily accessible?

The Youth Councillors thought it would be insightful for service providers to know if young people perceived drugs to be easily available to them and their peer group. Of those surveyed a staggering 69% of pupils responded saying that drugs were easily available.



In each ward over 50% of respondents comment that drugs are not hard to access. The only exception to this rule is in the Shelley Ward.

Breakdown by school	YES	NO
Braeside	44 (15.4%)	8 (84.6%)
Chigwell	181 (78%)	51 (22%)
Davenant	203 (74.1%)	71 (25.9%)
Debden Park High	172 (69.9%)	74 (30.1%)
Epping Forest College	12 (86%)	2 (14%)
Epping St Johns	560 (64.8%)	304 (35.2%)
King Harold Academy	407 (75%)	136 (25%)
The Ongar Academy	81 (41.1%)	116 (58.9%)
Roding Valley High	170 (67%)	83 (33%)
West Hatch	140 (80%)	35 (20%)
Ward by ward breakdown		
Buckhurst Hill West	44 (84.6%)	8 (14.4%)
Chigwell Village	321 (78.9%)	86 (12.1%)
Epping Lindsey & Thornwood Common	560 (64.8%)	304 (35.2%)
Loughton Alderton Ward	375 (72.1%)	145 (18.9%)
Loughton Broadway Ward	12 (85.7%)	2 (14.3%)
Loughton St Mary's Ward	170 (67%)	83 (33%)
Shelley Ward	81 (41.1%)	116 (58.9%)
Waltham Abbey North East Ward	407 (75%)	136 (25%)

Youth Councillors looked at social media, such as Snapchat, to reveal that laughing gas canisters are easily available; emojis display the balloon graphics so anyone, any age can find them and purchase them on line. You can meet the seller on the street or have the items posted. No age restrictions are present.

NO₂ is commonly sold as a food product, notably as a coffee creamer. The gas aerates the cream and is available online through numerous sellers such as Amazon. Amazon clearly has a disclaimer that products should not be purchased by under 18s but no other checks are made. Wholesalers import them and sell them for as little as 30p.



Question 5: We asked pupils... where were drugs available from?

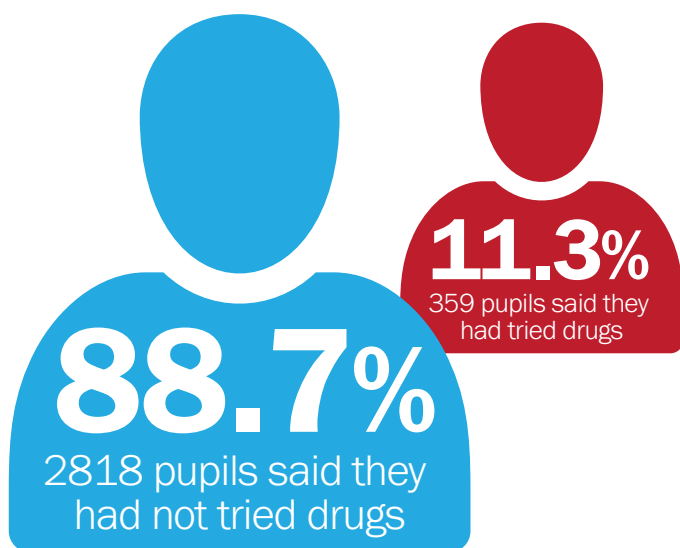
1251 pupils (39%) said that drugs are available online. Social media is increasingly popular with sites such as Instagram being used as a new method to purchase drugs. It can be very appealing as emojis are used to market the drugs available at locations wherever you are.



Pupils said drugs were available...	Number of pupils	Percentage of total surveyed
On the street	2583	81.30%
From friends	1167	36.73%
From family	295	9.29%
On-line	1251	39.38%
In school	671	21.12%
Did not answer	12	0.38%



Question 6: We asked pupils... have you tried drugs?



Across the survey 11% of pupils interviewed said they had tried drugs before.

Question 7: We asked pupils... which drugs have you tried?

Legal highs were the most commonly used drug with 296 pupils (9.3%) followed by cannabis with 253 pupils (8%) saying they had tried these drugs. Some of these individuals may have been taking multiple drugs.



Pupils said they had tried...

	Number of pupils	Percentage of total surveyed
Legal Highs (NO ₂ only)	256	8.06%
Legal Highs (other psychoactive substances)	40	1.26%
Cannabis	253	8%
Cocaine	79	2.5%
Ketamine	68	2.1%
MDMA (ecstasy)	77	2.4%

Question 8: We asked pupils... what made you want to try drugs?

Of the 359 people taking drugs, the reason for trying them are ...

Pupils said they had tried drugs because...	Number of pupils	Percentage of total surveyed
Boredom	137	38.2%
Curiosity	221	61.6%
Friends	143	39.8%
Family	43	12%
Peer Pressure	91	25.3%

Question 9: We asked pupils... If they were offered drugs, how confident were they to say no?

Positively, 92% of pupils said they could say no to drugs across all wards.

92%
COULD SAY
NO 
TO DRUGS

The National Picture

In 2016, 24% of pupils surveyed for the NHS (in the 'Smoking, drinking and drug use among young people – England 2016' report) said that they had taken drugs, compared to 15% in 2014. This rise is partially explained by the addition of laughing gas (nitrous oxide, NO₂) and other psychoactive substances, previously known as 'legal highs', to national surveys of drug use.

Other key trends found by the NHS included smoking, drinking and drug use among young people. It stated that cannabis remains the most common drug used by pupils nationally.

The main reasons given by pupils for taking drugs were:



52% of pupils obtained drugs in a street, park or outdoor area.

14% of pupils said they were at school.

14% were at someone else's home.

The likelihood of having ever taken drugs increased with age:

There is an 11% chance that 11 years will take drugs.

This rises to 37% for 15 year olds.

Younger pupils are more likely to have taken drugs alone.

15% of 11-13 years olds.

4% of 15-year olds.

Of those pupils nationally, who reported taking drugs over the past year

66% reported having taken only one kind of drug.

34% of pupils admitted taking two or more types of drugs.

18% of this group were taking at least one Class A drug.

What the Epping Forest Youth Council would like to see happen next

- **We must not become complacent.** Many of our findings are very encouraging, in particular that local drug use is significantly below the national average, and we should take pride in the fact that excellent work is already being done in the Epping Forest district to tackle this issue – but we must always remember that every young person taking drugs is one too many.
- **Service providers and funders need to continue their work to tackle the causes of drug use.** One important finding from our survey was that boredom is a much greater factor in causing drug use than peer pressure, challenging the traditional narrative that the way to stop drug use is to encourage young people to ‘just say no’. Although this strategy is still important, our findings show that a very encouraging 92% of respondents can say no to drugs. We would therefore encourage youth service providers to look at ways of providing worthwhile activities and education programmes for young people so they do not turn to drugs. (See Appendix B. Epping Forest Youth Activities Map).
- **We would like to see the work and funding continue to raise awareness of the danger that drugs pose to young people.** As EFYC’s drug awareness project ends, we believe that we have been successful in raising awareness of the danger of drugs, particularly in promoting the idea of ‘gateway drugs’ and discouraging the use of so-called ‘legal highs’. We encourage our reader to avoid using the term ‘legal highs’ as many drugs which used to be categorised as ‘legal highs’ are now, in fact, illegal; we also believe that this term almost seems to legitimise the use of highly dangerous drugs.
- Looking ahead to **Epping Forest Youth Council’s future project**, to build resilience to increase personal safety, assertiveness and awareness (be it of gangs, crimes, knives or drugs), **we implore further investigation between the relationship between gang crime and drug use and how tackling each problem can help solve the other.** As most street gangs are also in some way involved in the drug trade, it is crucial that the authorities continue to fund this valuable work particularly in relation to ‘county lines’ drug trading and child exploitation.



“ We cannot stop our children being exposed to drugs. The reality is they are out there. As our children get older there are so many influences they are exposed to, such as from TV, social media and from their friends. By increasing awareness of the risks and problems of substance use we hope that sharing of knowledge can contribute to better decisions, and as a result, better outcomes for young people. The councillors of the Epping Forest District Council are very supportive of the efforts of the Youth Council to raise awareness of the problem and the devastating consequences for individuals and society through their drugs study.”



Cllr Sam Kane
Community and Partnership
Services Portfolio Holder,
Epping Forest District Council

Next Steps: Lobbying Central Government

Given the widespread damage being done by NO₂ and its worrying rise in popularity, EFYC urges Council Members and other stakeholders to join with us in lobbying the Government and MPs to restrict the sale of NO₂ to under 18s. We believe that proof of age should be required by online retailers, in recognition of the fact that NO₂ can have a much more destructive effect than substances like alcohol for which restrictions are already in place.

- a) The Government could restrict the sale of these goods to under 18s through enforcing penalty charges and taxation on companies.
- b) The Government could investigate whether food companies should be forced to source an alternative product without the NO₂ content. A more moderate approach would be to incentivise this through taxation, following the example of the 'sugar tax'.
- c) The Government could make companies aware how their product is being misused. Aspects of this awareness campaign could certainly be done on a local level: for example, food standards inspectors working for the Council could ask local restaurants to consider using an alternative to NO₂ 'cream chargers'.
- d) The Government could impose conditions to make companies produce more environmental packaging and should ban the use of canisters to contain NO₂ as these are both an eyesore and environmentally destructive.



Methodology

- A total of 3233 surveys were received, 56 were rejected as the forms were spoilt.
- Surveys were available on line and hard copies were distributed to all secondary schools in the Epping Forest District.
- Surveys were anonymous to protect pupils identity.
- There is a variation in the responses we have per ward since some schools provided more responses than others. Few people responded from the Loughton Broadway ward and therefore this will be reflected in exaggerated percentage results.

Thanks

Epping Forest Youth Councillors would like to thank the pupils and schools for taking part in the survey. To the District Council's Waste Management team, Public Relations team, Economic Development, Essex Police, the City of London Wardens, Arriva Buses and to the Members of the District Council.

Further information

You can contact the Youth Council by email, telephone or text.

Email	efyc@eppingforestdc.gov.uk
Office telephone	01992 564 365
Mobile	0778 937 2179
Web Page	www.eppingforestdc/efyc



www.facebook.com/eppingyc



[@eppingyc](https://twitter.com/eppingyc)

Further Reading

- www.talktofrank.com/drug/nitrous-oxide
- www.cnwl.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/SERVARC_0815_A5-WEB.pdf
- assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/368576/RestrictingSupplyNitrousOxide.pdf
- www.healthline.com/health/nitrous-oxide-side-effects
- assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/544030/6_1845_HO_NPS_Resources_Booklet_June16_v10.pdf
- yourroom.health.nsw.gov.au/a-z-of-drugs/Pages/nitrous-oxide.aspx
- yourroom.health.nsw.gov.au/publicationdocuments/180312%20Nitrous%20Oxide%20Fact%20Sheet%20FINAL.pdf

References

‘NHS Smoking, Drinking and drug use among young people – England 2016’
Published 02 November 2017.
www.digital.nhs.uk

SAY NO TO GATEWAY DRUGS



DON'T OPEN THE GATE



SAY NO TO N₂O NITROUS OXIDE A.K.A LAUGHING GAS / BALLOONS

It is now illegal to supply or import nitrous oxide for human consumption



Using nitrous oxide starves your brain of oxygen which can lead to brain damage or even death



Affects breathing and causes damage to your lungs

Should not be in contact with skin or eyes



Causes brain damage in rats

Can cause a heart attack or stroke



Appendix A



efyc@eppingforestdc.gov.uk
 01992 564 365 07789 372179
 eppingyc @eppingyc eppingyc
eppingforestdc.gov.uk/efyc

Drugs Survey

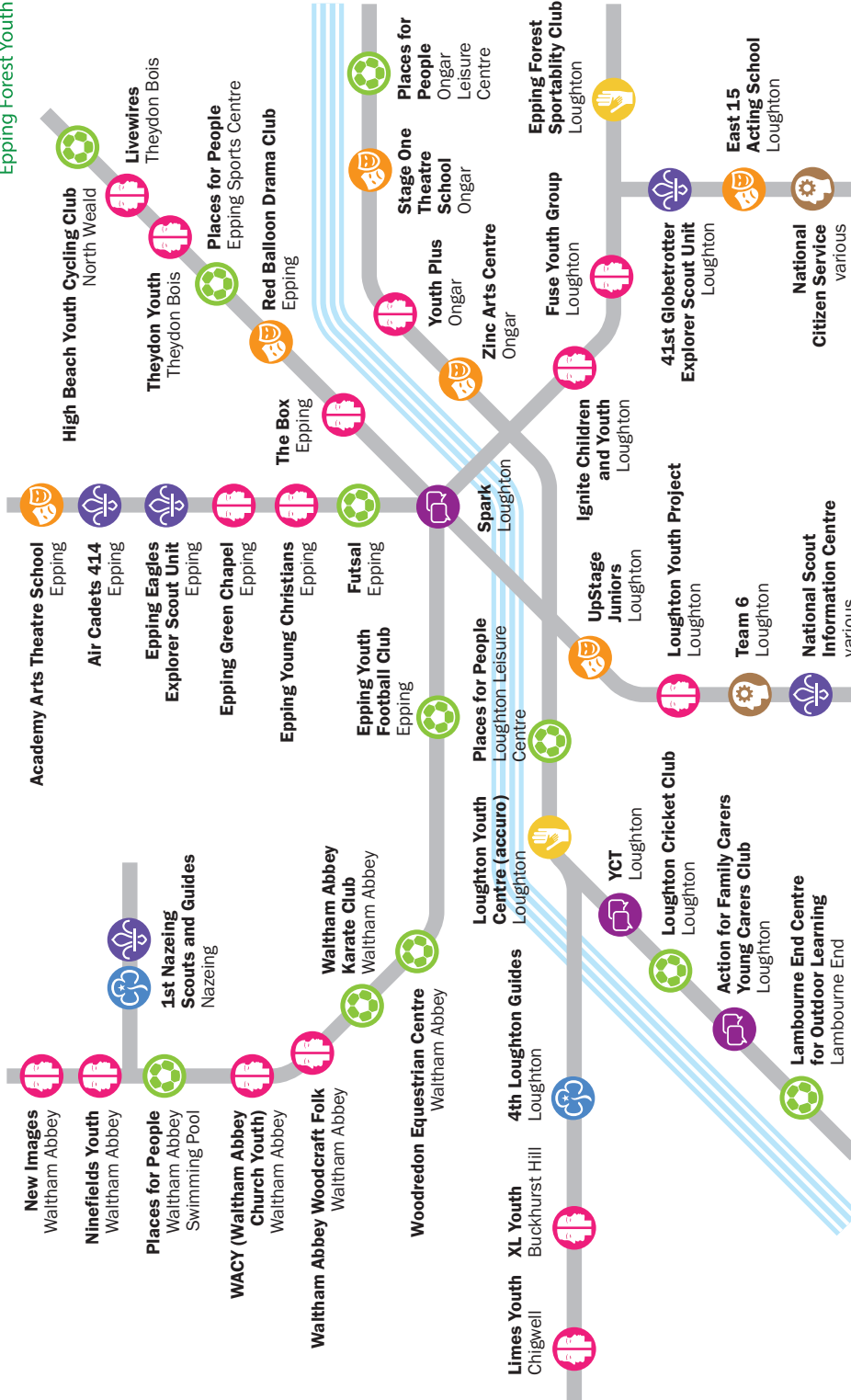
The Epping Forest Youth Council is conducting a short survey about drugs in the Epping Forest district and will be doing a project to help tackle this issue in your area. The information you give **will be anonymous** so please be as honest as possible. The data will be used to identify drug crime in our district.

Age:					
School/College/Other:					
Q1) Are you...	Male		Female		
	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>		
Q2) Where do you live? (Town/Village)					
Q3) Do you think drugs are an issue in your area?	Yes		No		
	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>		
Q4) Do you think drugs are easily available to young people?	Yes		No		
	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>		
Q5) Where are drugs available (Tick all that are appropriate)	On the street	In school	Online	From friends	From family
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Q6) Have you tried drugs before? (Please remember this is anonymous and you will not get into trouble)	Yes		No		
	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>		
Q7) If you answered Yes to Q6 please tell us which drugs you have tried (Tick all that are appropriate)	Weed	Laughing Gas	MDMA	Cocaine	Ketamine
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Q8) If you answered Yes to Q7 what made you want to try drugs? (Tick all that are appropriate)	Friends	Peer pressure	Family	Curiosity	Boredom
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Q9) Do you feel you can say no if you are offered drugs?	Yes		No		
	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>		

Thank you for taking time to complete this survey 😊
If you want any more information or support on drugs, please let the team know and we can provide you with some information

Appendix B

Youth Projects in Epping Forest 2019




























KEY




- Scouts & Guides
- Theatre & Dance
- Sports & Leisure
- Young people with a disability
- Youth Group
- Skills & Personal Development





Epping Forest Youth Council 2016 – 2018

Braeside Independent School	Chigwell School	Davenant Foundation School	
 Samantha Halcrow	 Simran Tiwana	 Abigail Whelan	 <small>EFYC MLAs Project – Winner of the National Crimebeat Award 2018</small>
 Jyoti Nag-Chaudhury	 Onyeka Okeke	 Eleanor Nsofor	
 Archie Flynn	 Barnaby Hodgkinson		
Debden Park High School			Epping St John's School
 Ashwin Gohil	 Jacob McNulty	 Rene Kent	 Stanimir Bakalov
			 James Beavis
			 Oliver Smith
			 Megan Wilson
			 Annabelle Yaman
King Harold Academy	The Ongar Academy	Roding Valley High School	Independent
 Tomas Gray	 Oliver Upson	 Harriette Pickering	 Tallulah Fontenelle
		 Jasmine James	
		 Daniel Mehr	
		 Zak Smith	
		 Florence New	




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Epping Forest Youth Council 2018 – 2020

