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Media Release

Portsmouth's new young person's drug and alcohol service is launched

Switch, Portsmouth's new young person's specialist substance misuse service is being officially launched on 3rd November 2011, at the Go For It Centre, Portsmouth (next to Portsmouth & Southsea railway station).

The service, provided by Cranstoun and supported by Portsmouth City Council through the Safer Portsmouth Partnership, helps young people in Portsmouth aged under 25 combat their alcohol and drug problems as well as supporting them with a range of other issues like education, employment, housing, relationships and sexual health.

The launch will see practitioners and service users come together to celebrate the successes of the service which has been operational since April this year. The Spinnaker Tower will be lit up Green (in line with Switch's logo) preceding the launch on the 2nd November.

Paul Edmondson-Jones, Director of Public Health for Portsmouth said: "The transitional stage from being a child to an adult can be the time when young people feel under the most pressure and may feel that misusing alcohol or drugs is an easy option.

Young people often start off using alcohol and cannabis but this can develop into using harder drugs in adulthood. That's why we have developed a substance misuse service specifically for this age group. By providing intervention at an early stage in a young person's development we hope to reduce the number of young people that go on to use harder drugs and who then enter the adult treatment system.

Switch has an experienced team that delivers a range of services centred around a multi-agency one stop shop approach, working in partnership with other agencies to provide effective transition into work, education, training and, where needed, into adult services"

The Lord Mayor, Councillor Cheryl Buggy, Portsmouth City Council said: “Drugs matter to the whole of society as all of us feel the impact. From crime in local neighbourhoods, through to families forced apart by dependency, to the corrupting effect of international organised crime, drugs have a profound and negative effect on communities, families and individuals.

The evidence is clear that young people’s substance misuse contributes to a wide range of other serious problems experienced by teenagers, such as failing or falling behind at school, involvement in crime and anti-social behaviour, becoming a victim of crime, teenage pregnancy, mental health problems, as well as risks of overdose and future drug dependency.

For those young people whose drug or alcohol misuse has already started to cause harm, or who are at risk of becoming dependent, Switch offers rapid access to specialist support that tackles their drug and alcohol misuse alongside any wider issues that they face”

Mark Poingdestre, Deputy Director of Cranstoun said: “Young People who are struggling with substance misuse problems have immense potential for change. Their response to new opportunities is often simply amazing! Switch really listens to where people are at and provides the opportunity for change, helping them find solutions in a range of different ways that really suit them individually.

Cranstoun’s experience as a specialist charity in the drug and alcohol field is combining fantastically well with the in-house teams from Portsmouth City Council to produce some really good results. Not just for young people themselves but for their friends and family as well. It’s a really productive partnership and everyone at Cranstoun is really proud of Switch’s work with the Safer Portsmouth Partnership.”

Aaron*, **16yrs**, Switch service user said: “I started smoking cannabis when I was 14. It was ok at first but then I began to feel tired all the time and I had real difficulty in sleeping. My memory was so poor that I often ‘lost’ a whole week at a time and I was regularly having hallucinations. My whole life was affected from school to relationships. Inside I felt so low and I wasn’t even able to make eye contact with people.

I was referred to **Switch** in April 2011 and it has changed my life. Within 2 months and with their support on a number of issues, I had stopped smoking cannabis and I now have a place at college to study engineering. I feel like a new person and I’m confident I won’t go back to drugs in the future”

If you would like advice or would like to make a referral/self referral, please contact **Switch** on **02392 825140**, visit us on **Facebook** or at www.areasorted.co.uk

Alternatively pop into the Switch Open Day on 17th November, from 9-11am at the Go For It centre on Station Street.

*Name changed to protect identity

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MEDIA INVITATION (places are limited and attendance must be confirmed beforehand)

Switch Launch, interview and photo opportunities – 3rd November 2.30pm to 4.30pm at the Go For It Centre, Station Street.

Spinnaker Tower, photo opportunities (which will be lit up Green in aid of the launch) – 2nd November at 5pm

NOTES TO EDITORS:

SWITCH

Switch is based at the Go For It Centre (next to Portsmouth & Southsea railway station). However, they will be happy to meet at locations across Portsmouth identified by young people wishing to access their services.

Switch currently provide satellite services at the Healthy Living Centre on Wednesday afternoons, All Saints Hostel on Thursday afternoons and Portsmouth Foyer on Friday mornings.

Switch started in April 2011 and in the first 3 months received 52 referrals (22 x 18 - 24 year olds, 24 x 16 - 17 year olds and 6 aged 15 and under). The majority of referrals (n37) were males. 39 referrals reported main substance as cannabis and 12 as alcohol.

Switch receive referrals from a wide variety of sources including: self referral; relative/family referral; school nurses, alcohol nurse service at QA; mental health services; young people's housing service; youth offending team; children's and family service.

Cranstoun

With over 40 years of experience of providing innovative and quality services, Cranstoun – registered charity – helps more than 15,000 people each year by supporting their recovery from drugs and alcohol misuse.

Cranstoun services include: residential treatment and rehabilitation; structured treatment and recovery services in the community; first steps to recovery and engagement, including outreach and harm reduction; recovery and reintegration services incorporating supported housing, employment, education and volunteer support; specialist young people's and women's services; and criminal justice services.

For further information visit www.cranstoun.org

Drugs and Young People: Know the Signs

Possible signs of drug/alcohol use can include changes in a young person's appearance, choice of friends, interests, eating and sleeping habits, mood and openness with you.

However, it's important to note that all these can be a natural part of growing up and a young person who is not using drugs or alcohol could show the same changes.

If you have suspicions, speak to your child but don't jump to any conclusions.

Switch can provide support, advice and information for friends and families who have concerns around a young person's drug or alcohol use.

IYSS & Go For It Centre

The Integrated Youth Support Service has two Go For It Drop in Centres for young people. One in Portsmouth next to Portsmouth and Southsea Station which is open between 0930

and 1630 Monday to Friday and a centre at 38 Medina Road, Cosham which is open Monday to Friday 13.00 to 16.30.

Young people aged 13 to 19 (25 with a disability) can access the drop in centres for a range of support, information, advice and guidance. This includes help with finding a job, including CV writing, interview techniques and careers guidance, information on further education, training opportunities and volunteering. Advice can also be given on relationships and health. Sex Sense and the GUM clinic hold regular drop in sessions for young people at Portsmouth Go For It every Wednesday afternoon.

If you're over 18 and are still unsure what you want to do for a career then Portsmouth Go For It can be contacted who will arrange an appointment in the centre with the Next Steps adult careers guidance service.

Further information about services offered by the Integrated Youth Support service can be found by accessing our website www.iyssportsmouth.info or contacting Portsmouth Go For It Centre on 02392732450 or Cosham on 02392288760.

Safer Portsmouth Partnership (SPP)

The SPP is a group of statutory and voluntary community agencies that meet regularly and work together to reduce crime, substance misuse and the fear of crime. Their goal is to make Portsmouth a safe place to live, work and visit.

For more information contact:

Krista Ford, Communications Officer, Safer Portsmouth Partnership

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