


Reflections of Members

"I never thought I could survive without benzodiazepines."

"I used medication to validate my feelings. Now I don't need to."

"I used Cannabis and drink to stop the feelings. Sometimes it hurts, but its' real"



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MEDICATION *And* *DRUG/ALCOHOL* *POLICY*



 **Thames Valley Initiative**
from rejection to recovery

Prescribed Medication

Options Groups

1. Upon joining Options, members are asked to provide to the group details of all prescribed and non-prescribed medication and drugs which they are currently taking.
2. The aim is to begin to explore the possibility of being medication-free and to begin the process of reduction, particularly of benzodiazepines /sedatives /hypnotics. Benzodiazepines are Valium-like drugs, eg diazepam/Valium, nitrazepam, temazepam, lorazepam. Other sedatives include zopiclone, zolpidem.
3. This process will largely be managed by GPs and CMHT's in collaboration with the members.

Members will need to have discontinued benzodiazepines/sedatives/hypnotics prior to visiting the therapeutic community or the spoke large groups.

Therapeutic Community and Spoke Large Groups

1. Upon joining, new members attend the next medication group to inform the community of all the medication that they are currently taking and to explore what changes may be of value. The GP will be informed in writing of the current medication situation, and will be asked to refrain from making hasty changes or reintroducing discontinued medication when members present in crisis.
2. The aim is to be free—within three months of joining the intensive therapy groups — of psychological medications which do not show clear or sustained benefits . This may include antipsychotic, antidepressant and mood stabilizer medication, **opiates like morphine, codeine and methadone** and any other potentially addictive prescribed drugs.
3. Where it is deemed appropriate by the staff team, certain of these medications may be continued if there is clear evidence of a well-documented history of a treatable psychiatric or physical illness or sustained benefits from taking the medication.
4. Following any agreed changes in the medication group, the GP will be advised in writing so that prescription records may be altered.

Non-Prescribed Drugs and Alcohol

In the therapeutic community or spoke large groups, we ask that a person who is physically dependent on a sedative or illegal substance (e.g. tranquilizers, street drugs or alcohol) gets to a state of no longer being physically dependent before joining the group. The Options group can provide support to manage this problem.

Members in possession of, or under the influence of illicit drugs, sedatives or alcohol risk having their attendance at the community suspended. This is due to the requirement of alertness needed for psychotherapy to work. Some substances impair this alertness to varying degrees (this can include some prescription medication also) and this impairment limits the extent to which individuals will be able to take part in and use the things that happen in a session.

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