

National Student Drug & Alcohol Conference 2026



Date: 12th May 2026

Location: The Union, MMU, 21 Higher Cambridge Street, Manchester, M15 6AD

Agenda Overview:

09:30 – 10:00	Registration opens		
10:00 – 10:10	Welcome Address Main Hall <i>Emma Young (Manchester Metropolitan University)</i>		
10:10 – 10:50	Putting Harm Reduction into Practice Panel Discussion Main Hall <i>Chair: Amira Campbell (President, NUS)</i> Start the day by exploring what harm reduction really means and how it translates into action on campus. Hear from staff based on campus, in the treatment sector and SOS UK about the work they have been doing; working through operational challenges, creating new projects, and making sure the work is what students need. Leave this session feeling excited about what’s possible, knowing your work is not in isolation.		
10:50 – 11:10	BREAK		
11:10 – 12:00	Workshop A: How can we collect data, and use it to shape our work? Conference Suite	Workshop B: How can we create effective harm reduction communications for students? Studio 1	Workshop C: How can our work support student belonging? Meeting Room 7 <i>Dr Kimberley Hill (University of Northampton)</i>

	<p><i>Molly Russell (SOS UK), Felicity Bath (Bath Spa), Rosie Harvey, (Northampton Students' Union)</i></p> <p>Join SOS UK for a preview of the most recent Students, Drugs and Alcohol survey findings and how to get involved in 2026, before hearing from colleagues on how they collected campus-specific data and, importantly, how they used those findings to target and refine their plans.</p> <p>Leave this session with a better understanding of how to gather meaningful campus wide data and use it to create change.</p>	<p><i>Holly Windows (UWE), Jaz Whiting (UWE)</i></p> <p>Getting messaging out to students is one of the key elements of a harm reduction approach, and when done well this can encourage seeking support and reduce stigma. Speakers will present how they have developed messaging, positioned harm reduction within wider work, and engaged students in a way that resonates.</p> <p>The discussion will include concrete examples of language, channels, and strategies that can strengthen your own campus communications on substance use.</p>	<p>Building a sense of belonging in student communities has been linked to success, retention and wellbeing. Bringing together academic research and practical implementation on campus, speakers will explore how campuses can support student belonging alongside work on harm reduction.</p> <p>Participants will leave this session with a better understanding of student belonging initiatives, and how work on harm reduction can support you in building an inclusive campus community.</p>
<p>12:00 – 12:45</p>	<p>LUNCH</p>		
<p>12:45 – 13:00</p>	<p>Drug and Alcohol Impact Awards Ceremony Main Hall</p> <p>Join us to celebrate our newly accredited Drug and Alcohol Impact campuses and hear from them about what they are most proud of achieving.</p>		
<p>13:00 – 13:30</p>	<p>Journey to Harm Reduction Queens' University Belfast Main Hall</p>		

	<p><i>Barry Cruickshank, Tara Cruickshank</i></p> <p>This session follows QUB and QUB SU as they share their journey toward harm reduction, highlighting the challenges they faced, hurdles they overcame, and the successes they achieved along the way. Participants will come away with practical tips and tricks, and a better understanding of how progress happens.</p>		
<p>13:30 – 13:40</p>	<p>BREAK</p>		
<p>13:40 – 14:30</p>	<p>Workshop D: How can specialist treatment services support our work? Meeting Room 7 <i>Neil Brooks (CGL), Jade Watts (CGL), Miya Kelly (CGL)</i></p> <p>Local and national drug and alcohol services are a source of expert advice, guidance and support – for your students, and your staff. Discussions will highlight how the treatment sector can work with higher education, with examples of best practice alongside new and innovative approaches.</p> <p>Participants will leave feeling confident in how building partnerships can strengthen work across harm reduction, prevention and early intervention</p>	<p>Workshop E: How can campuses benefit from developing on campus drug and alcohol support? Conference Suite <i>Eloise McDay (UCL), Ed Day (University of Birmingham), Dot Smith (Recovery Connections)</i></p> <p>Being able to feel confident in the support provided on campus will allow staff to be bolder in shaping responses to student drug and alcohol use. Our speakers will share their work to bring drug and alcohol support on to campus in a variety of ways and provide insight into how students and staff are engaging with this.</p>	<p>Workshop F: How can we involve students in our work on drugs and alcohol? Studio 1 <i>Maria Hunter (MMU), Fiona Carson (MMU), Noah Taylor (Bath Spa), Luke Heron (Bath Spa)</i></p> <p>Student involvement is essential to making an impact, and we know it is not always easy. Our student speakers will outline their experiences of being involved in drug and alcohol related work on campus, sharing why and how they got involved and what they have achieved.</p> <p>Leave this workshop with ideas of what works directly from students, with</p>

		At the end of this workshop, you will have a better understanding of what students need, and examples of what is possible.	practical tips and considerations for you to build into your planning.
14:30 – 15:15	<p>Recent Research and Innovation Showcase Main Hall <i>AJ Martin (Benzo Research Project), Rob Ralphs (GM Trends)</i></p> <p>Hear from two projects that are aiming to make wellbeing and harm reduction a priority in young people’s lives. Each speaker will provide an overview of their work and make the link back to your campus clear. Leave this session inspired, with new resources to support you.</p>		
15:15 – 15:30	BREAK		
15:30 – 16:15	<p>Reflecting and Responding Interactive Planning Main Hall <i>SOS UK</i></p> <p>Join the SOS UK wellbeing team for the final session of the day. Recap the key learnings, hear from others about what they plan to do when returning to campus, and capture your thoughts and next steps before heading back out into the world. This session will include a Q&A, as well as resource suggestions and prompt questions on all the topics we have covered during conference. End your day feeling able to rest on the journey back, knowing you aren’t forgetting anything.</p>		

16:15 –
16:30

Closing address