

Young Zionist

Drugsline – Now and for the Future

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For the past two decades Rabbi Aryeh Sufrin has been leading *Drugsline*, an anti-drugs support and education programme. His inspiration came from his experiences working with young people on the streets, **For many years we had to fight for people just to recognise that drugs are an issue.** His zero-tolerance ethos incorporates leading by example: many counsellors in the call centres, and education workers, are themselves recovering addicts. Indeed, he sees his main challenge and responsibility as a devout Jew, and as a concerned member of society, to assist others in what ever way he can. He makes it clear that in all he does it is the *people* that are his priority, as can be seen in the non-denominational approach of *Drugsline*. He sees the success of and motivation behind *Drugsline* as a prime example of how the Jewish community have led an important and much needed response to an overwhelming problem in the UK, and I believe this to be part of our greater purpose on this earth.

Although he started on the streets of Redbridge, the *Drugsline* counselling service is available to all, and Rabbi Sufrin has plans to extend his educational and palliative services throughout the UK. The educational outreach programmes offered by *Drugsline* reached 47,000 students this year alone, a record Rabbi Sufrin plans to break in the near future. However this could become more difficult as *Drugsline*, a charitable organisation, relies heavily on funding, a dwindling commodity in the current financial climate. Nonetheless, Rabbi Sufrin remains positive in the face of the challenges before us. We just have to worker harder for the today.

Rabbi Sufrin is now well known to the media. He recently debated the reclassification of cannabis with former Home Secretary David Blunkett, on the BBC's *Politics Show* (clip available on YouTube). He attributes the success of *Drugsline*, and the respect with which it is met, to the fact that we have become known by TV, radio and newspapers as an organisation that can be trusted with its facts and information, working on grass roots level with so many young people. And it is the next generation that is so important to him.

He sees a connection between drugs and knife crime, the watchwords of the troubling youth culture of today. Young people don't feel safe on the streets and gang culture is strong. Much of this revolves around drugs and money. ***Drugsline* seeks to provide education to prevent young people from getting involved in a downward spiral of drugs, and offers support to those who seek help from their current situation.**

In the words of its founder, *Drugsline* is a very exciting and successful organisation reaching ever increasing numbers through innovative and original ways.

For more information, please visit www.drugsline.org

Jessica graduated from Year Course in 2006.