

# PAIN- KILLERS DON'T EXIST.

Long-term pain medications  
don't kill pain, THEY MASK IT.

## PROLONGED USE CAN LEAVE LASTING DAMAGE, INCLUDING ADDICTION.

It's estimated that **5.6 million adults** in England take prescribed opioid medications<sup>1</sup>.



The number of prescriptions in England and Wales for opioid painkillers has risen dramatically from more than 14 million in 2008 to 23 million in 2018<sup>2</sup> – with **the North East being the biggest culprit**<sup>3</sup>.

Sunderland in particular has been dubbed '**the painkiller capital of the country**', where nearly 145,000 opioid prescriptions have been given out within the first six months of this year alone<sup>4</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Source: Public Health England, 2019

<sup>2</sup> Source: Department of Health, 2019

<sup>3</sup> Source: Faculty of Pain Medicine, Royal College of Anaesthetists, 2019

<sup>4</sup> Source: Openprescribing.net, 2019

**NO ONE SHOULD HAVE TO CHOOSE  
BETWEEN LIVING IN CHRONIC PAIN  
AND BATTLING ADDICTION.**

**Painkillers Don't Exist** is an NHS Sunderland campaign that aims to raise awareness of the dangerous effects of long-term, high-dose prescription pain medication and empower people living with pain to make informed decisions about their health.

# USE THEIR CHECK UP AS YOUR CHECK IN



## Is the patient already taking pain medication?

If so, how much and for how long have they been taking it?



## How does the patient feel?

Have they experienced any side effects from medication or noticed anything different in their day-to-day?

## How do they talk about their pain?

Is their level of pain affecting their day-to-day lives or are they concerned that their pain is coming back?

## How long have they been in pain?

If they have been in pain for a long time, have they been offered any alternatives to medication?

## Are they open to trying other ways to manage their pain?

Is there anything else you can recommend they try? Or another service they could be referred to?

# WHAT YOU CAN DO

## Be prepared to manage expectations.

Make sure patients are educated on the risks and potential side effects of the medication they are prescribed and that they know it's not a long-term solution.

It's vital that patients know the facts so they can make informed decisions about how best to manage their pain.



# IS PRESCRIPTION PAIN MEDICATION STILL THE BEST OPTION FOR THE PATIENT?

If so, make sure they leave knowing the potential side effects, and what to do if they experience any.

**Find out more:**  
[painkillersdontexist.com](http://painkillersdontexist.com)