

Drugs & Alcohol Policy

POLICY APPROVAL

Approval Required	Indicate with a tick (✓)		Annual Review Required	Indicate with a tick (✓)	
	Yes ✓	No		Yes ✓	No
Approval Panel	Loren Janes				
Approved by	Name: Loren Janes		Signature: 	Date: December 25	
Policy Review Date	December 2026				
Policy Writer/s:	Charlotte Manford				

Policy Statement

The centre is committed to providing a safe, healthy, and positive learning environment where all learners can flourish. Drugs, alcohol and substance misuse are significant safeguarding issues, and misuse is often linked to exploitation, peer pressure, mental health challenges, or criminal influence.

This policy sets out how the centre prevents, identifies, manages, and responds to drug and alcohol–related concerns, including vaping and the attempted distribution of drugs via social media platforms such as Snapchat, Instagram, TikTok, WhatsApp and similar.

The policy should be read alongside:

- Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy
- Behaviour Policy
- Learner Code of Conduct
- E-Safety Policy

Scope

This policy applies to:

- All learners
- All staff, volunteers, contractors, and visitors
- All centre premises, transport, placements, trips and online learning environments

It covers:

- Illegal drugs
- Legal highs and new psychoactive substances (NPS)
- Alcohol
- Tobacco and vaping products
- Misuse of prescription or over-the-counter medication
- Any attempt to distribute substances, including via social media

Definitions

Drugs:
Illegal substances, controlled drugs, prescription medication used improperly, over-the-counter medication used improperly, inhalants/solvents, NPS, and other psychoactive substances.

Alcohol:

Any alcoholic product.

Vaping/Tobacco:
E-cigarettes, disposable vapes, vape liquids, cigarettes, rolling tobacco, lighters and associated paraphernalia.

Attempted Distribution:
Any action where a learner tries to supply, arrange, advertise, promote, or procure substances, including via digital platforms such as Snapchat, even if the substances never reach the centre.

Principles

- The centre operates a zero-tolerance approach to possession, use, or supply of illegal substances on site.
- Drug and alcohol concerns are primarily treated as safeguarding issues, not solely disciplinary matters.
- Many young people involved in substance use or distribution are exploited or coerced; safeguarding takes precedence.
- Staff ensure learners feel safe to disclose concerns without judgement.
- The Behaviour Policy and Learner Code of Conduct reinforce expectations relating to safety, respect, conduct and responsibility.

Prevention & Education

The centre will:

- Deliver age-appropriate education on substance misuse, peer pressure, decision-making and digital safety.
- Provide targeted support for at-risk or vulnerable learners.
- Work collaboratively with external agencies: substance misuse teams, early help, youth offending, police, and social care.
- Promote healthy coping strategies and resilience through the curriculum, pastoral care and mentoring.

Expectations of Learners

Learners must not:

- Possess, use, share, or distribute drugs, alcohol, vapes or paraphernalia.
- Attend the centre under the influence of drugs or alcohol.
- Attempt to arrange supply, request, promote or advertise substances via social media.
- Encourage peers to access or use substances.
- Bring associated paraphernalia onto the premises.

These expectations are reinforced in the Behaviour Policy and the Learner Code of Conduct.

Expectations of Staff

All staff must:

- Model safe and responsible behaviour.
- Never work under the influence of drugs or alcohol.
- Follow safeguarding procedures promptly when concerns arise.
- Complete training relating to substance misuse, online risks and safeguarding.
- Seek support if they themselves experience substance-related difficulties.

Identifying Concerns

Staff must be alert to:

- Smell of alcohol, cannabis or solvents
- Slurred speech, unsteady movement, red eyes or unusual behaviour
- Paraphernalia such as vape liquid, grinders, wraps, pill containers
- Sudden behaviour changes, secretive phone use, or unexplained income
- Screenshots or disclosures of drug-related activity on Snapchat or similar platforms
- Learners referencing “plugs”, “connects”, “links”, “drops”, or other supply-related terms

All concerns must be reported immediately to the DSL.

Investigation Procedure for Drug-Related Incidents

All incidents involving drugs or alcohol—including attempted distribution online—will be investigated in a clear, structured manner.

Step 1 — Immediate Safety

- Ensure no immediate risk to the learner or others.
- Secure any substances found.
- Supervise learner away from peers if needed.
- Inform DSL or senior leader immediately.

Step 2 — Initial Fact-Finding

- Gather brief details from the reporting person.
- Obtain screenshots, messages or other supporting information (without staff searching personal devices unlawfully).
- Decide whether a formal investigation is required.

Step 3 — DSL-Led Investigation

Information gathering:

- Speak with the learner(s) involved.
- Interview witnesses as needed.
- Review behaviour logs, attendance data, previous concerns.

Evidence reviews:

- Examine supplied screenshots or descriptions of online activity.
- Record factual summaries rather than storing sensitive images where possible.

Parent/carer involvement:

- Notify parents/carers, unless doing so creates risk to the learner.

Multi-agency liaison:

May include:

- Police (required where distribution is indicated)
- Social care / exploitation teams
- Youth offending
- Substance misuse services
- Early help

Step 4 — Risk Assessment

The DSL completes a Digital / Substance Misuse Risk Assessment examining:

- Vulnerability (SEND, EOTIS, trauma etc.)
- Intent (supplying vs passing to friends)
- Influence or coercion by peers/adults

- Whether the learner may be exploited or groomed
- Access to money, substances or unsafe digital networks

Step 5 — Decision on Consequences & Support

Consequences and support pathways are determined proportionately, taking into account:

- Safeguarding needs
- Learner's level of understanding and vulnerability
- Nature of behaviour
- Behaviour Policy & Learner Code of Conduct

Step 6 — Recording & Monitoring

- All actions recorded on the safeguarding system.
- Monitoring schedule set (e.g., weekly check-ins).
- Ongoing tracking of mobile use, behaviour, attendance and peer groups.

Consequences for Drug-Related Incidents

Consequences are proportionate and contextual, balancing safeguarding and behaviour expectations.

Educational Responses

- Reflective meeting with delivery staff
- Educational intervention on risk-taking and digital safety
- Behaviour contract / safety contract
- Restrictions on mobile phone use at the centre
- Increased supervision
- Mentoring or counselling

Safeguarding Interventions

- Referral to substance misuse services
- Early Help involvement
- Referral to Youth Offending Service
- Referral to children's social care
- Strategy meeting for exploitation concerns
- Multi-agency plan development
- Reintegration plan following an incident

Behavioural Sanctions

Aligned with the Behaviour & Anti Bullying Policy, possible sanctions include:

- Formal warning
- Internal withdrawal from lessons
- Fixed-term exclusion
- Removal from off-site activities/work placements
- Adjusted timetable
- Temporary removal from the centre environment
- Final review of placement suitability

High-level or repeated attempts at distribution, especially online or via social media platforms, may result in termination of placement only once safeguarding routes are exhausted, recognising that many young people are victims of exploitation.

Police Involvement

Police must be notified when:

- There is evidence of supply or intent to supply
- Attempts are made to distribute via Snapchat or other platforms
- Illegal substances are found
- A significant threat to safety exists

Police involvement does not automatically lead to exclusion or placement termination; a contextual safeguarding approach will be used.

Staff Substance Misuse

Concerns relating to staff follow the Staff Code of Conduct and Disciplinary Policy, and may involve:

- Occupational health support
- HR procedures
- Formal disciplinary action where required

Medication

Medication for learners must follow the Centre's Medication Policy. Misuse of medication is treated under this policy and as a safeguarding concern.

Off-Site Activities & Work Placements

All partners delivering activities on behalf of the centre must have appropriate policies. Staff leading trips must follow this policy at all times.

Visitors and Contractors

Visitors must comply with this policy. Anyone appearing under the influence will be asked to leave and the DSL informed.

Monitoring & Review

The Senior Leadership Team and DSL monitor:

- Drug-related incidents
- Trends involving online attempted distribution
- Behaviour patterns and safeguarding referrals

Policy reviewed annually or sooner if legislation changes.

Related Policies and Guidance

- Behaviour & Anti Bullying Policy
- Learner Code of Conduct
- Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy
- E-Safety Policy

- Health & Safety Policy
- Learner Medication Policy
- Educational Visits Policy