

SUBSTANCE MISUSE IN SCHOOL

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SUBSTANCE MISUSE IN SCHOOL - POLICY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

This policy outlines the aims and approaches of effective substance use education, and reflects current national guidelines and research in this important area, including the principles of GIRFEC (Getting it Right for Every Child). It is anticipated that these guidelines will inform and support existing work in schools, and assist in evaluating policies and procedures in substance education. This section outlines guidelines for the delivery of substance education, and complements the guidelines on the management of substance related incidents in section 2.1.

Schools, like their communities, are not immune from the effects of substance misuse upon pupils and their families. A school demonstrates responsibility and care for young people by providing effective substance education and a measured response to incidents based on planned procedures, including pupil substance misuse and protection and support in situations where children are affected by parental substance misuse.

Research indicates that the earlier a young person starts to use alcohol, tobacco or experiment with illegal drugs/new psychoactive substances, the more likely they are of developing problematic or harmful substance misuse. As such, substance education should begin well before experimentation, which means at primary school stage.

1.2 Strategic Drivers

Rights, Respect and Recovery (Scottish Government 2018) is the national strategy to improve health by preventing and reducing alcohol and drug use, harm and related deaths. For the first time it combines Scotland's drug and alcohol strategies due to perceived commonalities between those affected and the potential responses.

In 2009 the Scottish Government, in partnership with COSLA, published A New Framework for Local Partnerships on Alcohol and Drugs. This framework was subsequently updated in 2019 following the launch of the Rights, Respect and Recovery strategy.

Getting It Right for Children and Families affected by Parental Problem Alcohol and Drug Use (NHS Lothian 2013) provides information and cause for reflection on our practice in school settings. This has resulted in the inclusion of a section dealing with this important area. In commending the policy to staff, parents and supportive agencies it is clear that we must all maintain and develop both our own knowledge of the challenges to young people and our ability to make a difference in education and prevention. Finally, when our young people do make harmful decisions associated with substance use, it is of vital importance that all agencies can make effective contributions to support and advise, thus enabling healthy lifestyle decisions to prevail. These policy guidelines are designed to assist with this process and ensure a safe and consistent approach is given to the young people in our schools.

The UNCRC article 33 states that 'Governments must protect children from the use of illegal drugs.'

The Scottish Government wants children and young people to develop the knowledge and understanding, the skills and the abilities to grow and fulfil their potential - to be able to take care of their mental, emotional, social and physical wellbeing both now and in the future.

We are taking forward substance misuse education work in our schools through Curriculum for Excellence. This covers controlled drugs, new psychoactive substances, safe use of medicines, alcohol, tobacco and solvents. Children and young people will explore the impact risk taking behaviour has on life choices and health. Giving clear information on the risks helps young people to make healthy choices.

All learning is appropriate to the age and stage of the child or young person. In the latter stages of education, learners will be able to:

- *understand the impact that ongoing misuse of tobacco, alcohol and drugs can have on a person's health, future life choices and options*
- *identify safe and unsafe behaviours and actions*
- *know that alcohol and drugs can affect people's ability to make decisions*

Schools, families and the media influence the ways children and young people learn about and behave towards alcohol. Substance misuse education is an integral part of the new school curriculum with children and young people learning and developing their understanding of the impact of risk-taking behaviour, including the excessive use of alcohol, on their life choices. The aim is to help children and young people make informed personal choices which will help them lead healthy lifestyles now and in the future. This needs to be enforced by parents, youth organizations and the media

1.3 Definitions

As defined by the World Health Organisation, the terms **drug** or **substances** in this policy refer to all types of drugs:

- legal drugs e.g. alcohol, tobacco
- illegal drugs
- new psychoactive substances (NPS)
- medicines (prescription and over the counter medicines)
- volatile substances

Substance abuse refers to:

- the harmful or hazardous use of psychoactive substances, including alcohol and other illicit drugs. Psychoactive substance use can lead to dependence syndrome – a cluster of behavioural, cognitive and physiological phenomena that develop after repeated substance use and that typically include a strong desire to take the drug, difficulties in controlling its use, persisting in its use despite harmful consequences, a higher priority given to drug use than to other activities and obligations, increased tolerance, and sometimes a physical withdrawal state

1.4 EDUCATION AND PREVENTION

Roles and Responsibilities

The responsibility for leading a school lies with the Head Teacher. There is, however, an obvious need for schools to deal consistently with substance education and with substance related incidents since these may concern and involve the police. Substance misuse is an emotive issue, which may attract the attention of the media, and will certainly concern parents. Schools must take into account the health and wellbeing of individual pupils but also have to consider the impact of decisions on the general order and discipline of the school.

Substance education is clearly defined in the Curriculum for Excellence health and wellbeing experiences and outcomes. Learners develop the understanding of the use and misuse of a variety of substances including prescribed medicines, alcohol, drugs, tobacco and solvents. They explore and develop their understanding of the impact of risk taking behavior and life choices.

We must be realistic about what can be achieved. Schools cannot solve all society's problems but can and must contribute effectively to strategies to help young people protect themselves

from harm and enable them to make healthy lifestyle choices. Substance education is not, therefore, about therapy or classroom disclosure about drug use, but rather has three key elements:

- Giving accurate and relevant information
- Exploring attitudes and values
- Developing skills.

Programme plan and delivery

Substance education is most effective when it:

- Gives both legal and illegal substances equal status within the programme and is informed by local trends and research
- Provides accurate, realistic, relevant and up-to-date information about substances and their effects, possible risks, consequences and legal implications
- Is consistent across schools, particularly within school cluster groups, to allow continuity and progression and avoid duplication
- Is embedded within the Health and Wellbeing education or PSE curriculum and permeates all curriculum areas
- Is interactive and facilitates discussion between groups of pupils who share their knowledge with each other
- Takes into account the experiences, prior knowledge, beliefs and attitudes of the young people
- Is continually evaluated, reviewed and updated based on research findings, good practice guidelines and pupil evaluations
- Ensures school establishes effective partnerships with its local community, community organisations and specialist agencies.

Substance education should therefore:

- Promote positive, healthy lifestyle choices
- Acknowledge that young people make their own choices and decisions about substance use
- Signpost young people to available support services, both local and national
- Be relevant to the needs of the pupil and the school community
- Take account of culture, ethnicity and diversity
- Take account of pupils' attainment levels, including those with special educational needs
- Take account of pupils with drug or alcohol misusing parents/carers

It is imperative that staff, when delivering substance education, take account that some young people may be coping with parental or family substance use at home. Staff should remain sensitive and be aware of behaviour change that is out of character (e.g. becoming withdrawn or acting out) as this may indicate that the young person is uncomfortable in the session.

In planning and delivering substance education, schools and external agencies must operate within child protection guidelines. The topics of confidentiality and child protection should be discussed with the pupils prior to commencing any drug education. This is done most effectively by establishing ground rules at the start of a programme of substance education. Teachers or external agencies should never offer pupils complete confidentiality due to child protection guidelines.

Useful links to support programme delivery can be found on the Health and Wellbeing Sharepoint and include:

<https://www.nhsggc.scot/staff-recruitment/staff-resources/substance-misuse-toolkit/alcohol/>
<https://www.nhsggc.scot/staff-recruitment/staff-resources/substance-misuse-toolkit/drugs/>
<https://www.nhsggc.scot/staff-recruitment/staff-resources/substance-misuse-toolkit/tobacco/>

SUBSTANCE MISUSE IN SCHOOL - OPERATIONAL PROCEDURES

The majority of young people in Scotland, of school-age, are not regular users of any substances.

The [Scottish Schools Adolescent Lifestyle and Substance Use Survey \(SALSUS\) 2018](#) outlines the prevalence of smoking, drinking and drug use in 2018 and the trends over time. It looks at the risk factors and protective factors associated with substance use, sources of substances, attitudes towards substance use, and views on the support and advice provided by schools. Going forward, SALSUS will be replaced by the [Children's Health and Wellbeing Census](#).

Most will at some stage be occasional users of drugs for medicinal purposes and many will try tobacco or alcohol. There are complex motivations behind a young person's decision to first experiment with alcohol, tobacco, volatile substances and drugs. Very few of those who experiment with drugs, however, will go on to become problem drug users. All pupils, including those in primary schools, are likely to be exposed to the effects and influences of drugs in the wider community and be increasingly exposed to opportunities to try drugs. Every school therefore has a responsibility to consider its response to drugs.

A comprehensive substance policy should also include advice and guidance on how to deal with problematic parental and staff substance misuse. This becomes a matter of concern when it adversely affects the quality of care that a child receives and poses a risk to health and development. While a number of parents with problem substance misuse are known to services, there may be many more who remain unidentified and whose children may be 'at need' or 'at risk'. Incidents are often complex, and no policy can cover all situations. The aim of this section is to encourage better planned and targeted practice that is understood and agreed by all who may be involved in a substance related incident. This includes pupils, parents, staff and agencies such as police.

An "*incident*" refers to any of the following situations:

- Suspicious substance found on school premises
- Syringes or hypodermic needles found on school premises.
- Incident involving possession of alcohol
- Incident involving use of tobacco
- Pupil or parent suspected to be under the influence of a drug, alcohol or volatile substance
- Disclosure of substance misuse
- Pupil found/suspected to be in possession of a substance or suspected of supplying

Sphera should be used for incident reporting, where health and safety is considered to be an issue.

2.2 Suspicious substance found on school premises

This refers to when a suspected substance (other than alcohol or tobacco) is found on school premises, including grounds, and staff cannot identify the owner of the substance or any pupil involvement.

School Response

- Take control of the substance.
- Inform Head Teacher (Designated Member of Staff if not available) and hand them the substance.
- Retain the substance in secure storage, and contact the police who will attend to

collect it.

- School staff should not take on investigative procedures as it is the role of the police to determine the level of evidence required to progress with an investigation. However, in some circumstances a level of fact-finding may be appropriate to inform staff decision-making and to help ensure pupil wellbeing.
- Consider completing an Incident Report Form on Sphera (Health & Safety) if appropriate.

Syringes, needles or other substance-related paraphernalia found on school premises

- Do not touch the item/s.
- Create a safe environment with no staff or pupil access to the area.
- Inform Head Teacher or DMS and ensure all relevant staff are aware.
- Contact Nets and Land Services on 01506 280000.
- Consider recording an incident report on Sphera.

2.3 Incidents involving possession of alcohol

Schools have a crucial role to play in preparing children to live in an alcohol using society, and to help them cope with alcohol-related situations. This means that alcohol should be given equal status to drugs within substance misuse education. Schools need to recognise the mixed messages young people hear about the use and risks of alcohol. The social acceptability, cultural and legal status of alcohol is very different from drugs. Consequently, the response to incidents involving alcohol is distinct from the response to those involving drugs.

School Response

Administer/seek any medical aid required (if the pupil is under the influence of alcohol refer to section 2.5).

- If possible, take control of the alcohol and retain in safe storage.
- Inform Head Teacher (Designated Member of Staff if not available) and hand them the alcohol.
- Head Teacher informs the pupil's parent or carer.
- Head Teacher to dispose of the alcohol, if identified as such, in the presence of a witness.
- Unidentified suspected harmful liquids to be stored securely, pending investigation by the police/ trading standards.
- Consider and agree appropriate action including support and next steps (see advice below).
- Consider completing an Incident Report Form on Sphera and record on SEEMIS Pastoral Notes where pupil wellbeing has been impacted.

Police Response

A police response is not required for incidents involving alcohol as it is not illegal for a young person to possess alcohol. It is, however, illegal for an adult to sell alcohol to a young person under the age of 18; and for an adult to buy or attempt to buy alcohol on behalf of someone under the age of 18. If the school learns that the alcohol was supplied illegally then the school should contact the police.

Support and Next Steps

- The school's response to incidents involving pupils should be based on the welfare needs of the pupils and wider school community and in line with the Promoting Positive Relationships in West Lothian Educational Establishments policy.
- Discussions around supports and next steps should include the views of the young person and their parents/carers and consideration should be given to seeking external support through the agencies detailed in **Appendix 1**.

2.4 Incidents involving the use/possession of tobacco, e-cigarettes/vaporisers

All school staff have a responsibility to implement the ['Smoke Free policy'](#) (West Lothian Council 2015).

School Response

- Ensure that it is only tobacco that is being used. If another substance is suspected then refer to the guidelines provided in section 2.5.
- Confiscate tobacco products being used on school premises.
- The legal age for the purchase of e-cigarette and vapouriser products is 18, therefore these should be confiscated if used in school.
- Consider and agree appropriate action including support and next steps (see advice below).
- Where e-cigarettes/vapourisers are involved refer to the [Ash Scotland](#) website.
- If suspected of being illicit or counterfeit product, contact trading standards via tradingstandards@westlothian.gov.uk

Police Response

- If it is only tobacco that is being used then there is no need to involve the police.
- If another substance is suspected then follow the guidance in section 2.5

Support and Next Steps

- The school's response to incidents involving pupils should be based on the welfare needs of the pupils and wider school community and in line with the Promoting Positive Relationships in West Lothian Educational Establishments policy.
- Discussions around supports and next steps should include the views of the young person and their parents/carers and consideration should be given to seeking external support through the agencies detailed in **Appendix 1**.

2.4 Pupil suspected to be under the influence of a drug, alcohol or volatile substance

This refers to when a pupil's behaviour or appearance suggests that they may be under the influence of a substance. This procedure should be followed regardless of whether the substance is thought to be legal or illegal. The pupil's welfare is of paramount importance. Please note that such symptoms may be caused by other medical conditions so it is important not to make assumptions.

School Response

- A member of staff should assess whether the pupil requires medical attention to minimise the risk of them harming themselves or others.
- A person who is unconscious, having trouble breathing, seriously confused, disorientated or agitated, very sleepy or showing extreme hyperactivity should be responded to as a medical emergency.

In A Medical Emergency

- If a member of staff decides that the pupil needs medical attention, a trained member of staff such as the school nurse or a first aider, should provide First Aid
- This person may decide that an ambulance should be called. If there is no first aider available then call for an ambulance
- If the pupil is unconscious, place them in the recovery position
- If the pupil is conscious the member of staff should try to ascertain WHAT the pupil has taken, HOW MUCH they have taken and WHEN they took it
- Do not give anything by mouth
- Do not attempt to make the pupil sit or stand
- Do not leave the pupil unattended or in the charge of another pupil
- Inform the Head Teacher or Designated Member of Staff (DMS)
- Inform the pupil's parent or carer immediately.
- Any information regarding the substance should be passed onto the ambulance staff
- Arrange for an appropriate adult to accompany the pupil to hospital. If the parent is unavailable, a member of staff should act as the 'responsible adult'
- Ensure the well-being of other pupils at all times
- Consider support and next steps as outlined below
- Complete an Incident Report Form on Sphera and record on SEEMIS Pastoral Notes where pupil wellbeing has been impacted.

If Medical Help Is Not Required

- Take the pupil to a quiet room - preferably with a second member of staff.
- Try to ascertain WHAT the pupil has taken, HOW MUCH they have taken and WHEN they took it. Keep the pupil under observation, warm, quiet and conscious
- Inform the Head Teacher or Designated Member of Staff
- Consider asking the pupil's parent/carer to collect the child
- Monitor the pupil's behaviour and continually assess whether medical attention is required
- Ensure the well-being of other pupils at all times
- Consider support and next steps as outlined below
- Consider completing an Incident Report Form on Sphera and record on SEEMIS Pastoral Notes where pupil wellbeing has been impacted.

Police Response

- The medical welfare of the pupil is of paramount importance.
- If a pupil is under the influence of a substance, a police response is not compulsory as it is not illegal for a young person to be under the influence of a substance.
- However, school should contact police where the pupil possesses an illegal substance (see section 2.6), their behaviour is a threat to the safety of staff and other pupils or if there is felt to be a related concern around supply of alcohol and drugs to young people.

Support and Next Steps

- The school's response to incidents involving pupils should be based on the welfare needs of the pupils and wider school community and in line with the Promoting Positive Relationships in West Lothian Educational Establishments policy.
- Discussions around supports and next steps should include the views of the young person and their parents/carers and consideration should be given to seeking external support through the agencies detailed in **Appendix 1**.

Pupil disclosure of substance misuse

- Assess whether the young person is at risk of harm.
- If yes, then inform Head Teacher or DMS and follow Child Protection Procedures
- If no, provide relevant information on effects, risks and support services. Record incident on Pastoral Notes and consider notifying parent/carer where appropriate.

Parents/Carers under the Influence

- If a parent or carer arrives at school to collect a pupil and appears to be intoxicated, the school should decide whether the parent/carer is able to provide appropriate care for the child.
- The Head Teacher or DSM should be informed of any concerns.
- If the school decides that allowing the child/ren to leave with the parent/carer would put them at risk of harm, then Child Protection Procedures should be followed.
- If the parent/carer becomes aggressive or threatening, the school may wish to contact the police.
- If it is thought that parental problem alcohol and drug use is compromising a child's health, development or welfare then Child Protection Procedures should be followed.

2.5 Pupils found/suspected to be in possession of an illegal/harmful substance or suspected of supplying

School Response

- Administer/seek any medical aid required (if the pupil appears to be under the influence of a substance refer also to section 2.5).
- The school can request that the pupil hand over the suspected substance. If the pupil refuses, however, school staff have no authority to search the pupil.
- If possible, take control of the substance, inform Head Teacher and/or Designated Member of Staff immediately, and ensure that it is retained in safe storage.
- Inform the pupil's parent or carer immediately unless there is knowledge or suspicion that the substance was supplied by the parent or carer.
- Inform the police and hand them the substance on their arrival. If the pupil refuses to hand over any suspected substance then the police will decide whether searching the pupil is appropriate.
- There is no expectation that school staff take on any investigative procedure as it is the role of the police to determine the level of evidence required to progress with an investigation. However, in some circumstances a level of fact-finding may be appropriate to inform staff decision-making and to help ensure pupil wellbeing.
- Consider support and next steps as outlined below.
- Complete an Incident Report Form on Sphera and record on SEEMIS Pastoral Notes where pupil wellbeing has been impacted.

Police Response

- Police will arrange attendance at the school and, if appropriate, search the pupil and other places/premises and seize any suspected substance or associated evidence. The police will determine the level of evidence required to progress with an investigation.
- The substance will be identified by the police, who may later inform the school of the result. The police investigation will determine whether the circumstances meet the criteria for personal use or supply.
- The police will inform the school of any action taken.

Support and Next Steps

- The school's response to incidents involving pupils should be based on the welfare needs of the pupils and wider school community and in line with the Promoting Positive Relationships in West Lothian Educational Establishments policy.
- Discussions around supports and next steps should include the views of the young person and their parents/carers and consideration should be given to seeking external support through the agencies detailed in **Appendix 1**.

Operational Procedures Updated October 2022

Martin Berginis (Child Protection Officer) and Lisa Moore (Education Officer – Health and Wellbeing)

APPENDICES TO OPERATIONAL PROCEDURES

Appendix 1 Local Services, Agencies and Supports

Appendix 2 Useful Websites

Appendix 3 Key Aspects of an Effective Response

Appendix 1: Local Services, Agencies and Supports

West Lothian Drug and Alcohol Partnership (WLDAS)

WLDAS is a third sector organisation which provides evidence-based, accessible services to individuals and families across West Lothian. They aim to reduce the harm caused by drugs, alcohol and tobacco through:

- Information and resources
- Prevention, education and training inputs
- Counselling and support

WLDAS work in partnership with the multi-agency West Lothian Wellbeing Recovery Group to discuss and support young people.

They also accept direct referrals for young people aged 12-18 who require support with their own substance use or who are impacted by a family member's problematic substance use.

Further information relating to WLDAS and the process for making referrals can be found at: www.wldas.com.

Circle

Circle West Lothian offer a range of services designed to meet the needs of individuals and families impacted by drug and alcohol use. They work alongside families to help them build upon existing strengths to make and sustain positive lifestyle choices.

Supports offered to children and young people:

Therapeutic 1:1 support for children and young people in schools or in the local community. Creative approaches are used to help children express their emotions, build their confidence and develop resilience to help them cope with any difficulties.

Supports offered to parents and carers:

- recovery from substance use
- improving family relationships and providing practical support, e.g. establishing boundaries and routines within your home
- managing your children's behaviour
- accessing local services and activities for you and your children
- improving nursery and school attendance and achievement for your children
- addressing your own and your family's health needs
- attending meetings with other professionals.

Further information and referral details can be found at: <https://circle.scot/services/families-affected-by-drugs-alcohol/>

West Lothian Alcohol and Drugs Partnership

The West Lothian Alcohol and Drugs Partnership (ADP) is a multi-agency partnership that has strategic

responsibility for coordinating actions to address local issues with alcohol and drugs.

Its members include Police Scotland, HMP Addiewell, West Lothian Council, NHS Lothian and the Voluntary Sector.

West Lothian ADP commissions and works with a number of partners to help adults and families address problematic substance use and to achieve sustainable recovery. Details on services can be found at:

<https://westlothianhscp.org.uk/article/29290/West-Lothian-ADP-Services>

West Lothian ADP and its partners help any young person or adult with alcohol or drug problems in West Lothian and provide a quick and easily accessible service via confidential drop in sessions. More detail on these sessions can be found here: <https://westlothianhscp.org.uk/article/29291/How-to-get-Help>

Appendix 2: Useful Websites and Resources

NHS Inform

<https://www.nhsinform.scot/healthy-living>

Advice and tools around ensuring a responsible relationship with alcohol and information about drug use, avoiding an overdose, dependency and where to find help and support.

Choices For Life

<https://young.scot/campaigns/national/choices-for-life>

'hoices for Life aims to raise awareness amongst young people aged 11-18, about the dangers of smoking, alcohol and drugs as well as online safety and information on how to deal with negative peer pressure. This website pulls together a range of videos, teaching resources and information packs which can be used by professionals, parents and young people.

Ash Scotland

<https://www.ashscotland.org.uk/>

ASH Scotland – Action on Smoking and Health (Scotland) - is an independent Scottish charity taking action to reduce the harm caused by tobacco. Their website provides information, guidance and support to enable others to take action on smoking and health.

Alcohol Focus Scotland

<https://www.alcohol-focus-scotland.org.uk/>

AFS seek to reduce the impact of alcohol on individuals, families, communities and Scotland as a whole, through the implementation of effective alcohol control policies and legislation. Their website provides information, training and resources related to reducing alcohol-related harm in young people and adults.

Know The Score

<https://knowthescore.info/>

Detailed facts and information related to drugs, downloadable resources and links to help and support.

Talk To Frank

<https://www.talktofrank.com/>

Talk to Frank is a website which provides access to information about the most commonly used drugs, advice from professionals and up to date news on current legislation illicit substances.

<https://blogs.glowscotland.org.uk/re/renfrewshirehwb/substance-misuse/>

Appendix 3: Key Aspects of an Effective Response

When discussing sensitive issues with young people staff should be aware of the following:

<p style="text-align: center;"><u>DO</u></p> <p>Ask factual questions about:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Which drug• Quantity• When taken <p>Operate within the school rules and responsibilities for pupils.</p> <p>Make clear the limits of confidentiality and refer the incident to the Head Teacher or DMS.</p> <p>Record the facts on Sphera and/or Seemis Pastoral Notes where appropriate.</p> <p>Be aware of impact of confidentiality and pupil rights and views on information sharing.</p>

<p style="text-align: center;"><u>DO NOT</u></p> <p>Ask leading questions</p> <p>Interrogate</p> <p>Accuse</p> <p>Make assumptions about guilt</p> <p>Detain a pupil in a locked room</p> <p>Search personal belongings</p> <p>Keep the incident to yourself (you alone cannot have an overview of the situation or the risk factors)</p> <p>Rely on general impressions-they may be inaccurate and make it more difficult for others to help.</p>

Any enquires from the media should be referred to Corporate Communications within West Lothian Council via Media@westlothian.gov.uk.