

ST PETER'S CHURCH HERSHAM DRUGS POLICY.

Introduction

This policy has been formulated based on the Surrey Youth Service Drug Policy.

What do we mean by drug?

A drug is any substance taken into the body which alters the way the body functions emotionally, physically or mentally. This includes tobacco, alcohol, solvents, prescribed and over the counter medicines as well as illicit substances.

Aim of the policy

This document is to be seen and used as a resource to support the front line youth work staff. The Policy will further the understanding of youth workers and enhance their knowledge of drugs and the issues relating to them. The document will incorporate policy and practice enabling youth workers to develop their understanding. The overall aim of the policy is to use youth work skills and resources to reduce all possible aspects of harm to young people relating to drug use.

Purpose

The purpose of the policy is to provide a framework in which youth work takes place within a legal, professional and Health and Safety framework.

Premises and Practices

Youth workers have a responsibility if they are aware that young people possess any form of controlled drug on their premises. (This includes any young person whom the youth worker believes has recently used, or is under the influence of drugs or alcohol, which may affect their behaviour or the safety of other people.)

All youth workers should be actively involved in the communication of skills, values and accurate knowledge to young people in order to help them make informed choices with relation to drugs and alcohol. This should take place alongside the provision of a secure but drug and alcohol free environment wherever that may be. Young people need to be aware of the rules in relation to the use of drugs and alcohol in a youth work environment and be willing to abide by those rules.

The youth worker is at risk of prosecution if the supply and use of any illegal drug is taking place on the premises. The simple handing of a drug from one person to another can be classed as supply.

Good Practice

In order to prevent use or supply of drugs, youth workers should be able to demonstrate they have used reasonable means to do so e.g.

- Vigilance
- Adequate supervision and lighting
- Notices
- Warnings e.g. verbal or written
- Graded sanctions e.g. withdrawal of privileges or non-participation in activities
- Temporary exclusion
- Permanent exclusion
- Injunctions
- Involving the police
- Closure of premises

Duty of Care

The Church owes a Duty of Care to young people and has a duty to provide a safe working environment for staff and volunteers.

Duty of Care varies from organisation to organisation and case to case. This needs to take into account the vulnerability, risk and needs of all young people, as well as the role of youth workers.

When working with young people who are using drugs, the Duty of Care will include a duty to provide appropriate support and advice and be fair in how sanctions such as exclusions are used. Conversely, a duty also exists to protect young people from harassment by others, including those who are intoxicated and to prevent harm arising from the supply of drugs on the premises.

Contact with Parents and Carers

When working with young people under the age of 18, parents should be contacted in cases of use (as recorded) of alcohol, solvents or any illegal drug, whenever there is any indication of serious risk to health. **However, youth workers are not legally bound to do so.**

It is accepted that many young people live in extended or 'blended' families. Where possible the youth worker should ascertain the appropriate adult/legal guardian to contact.

Where a youth worker knows that family relationships may be an important contributory factor to drug use or the youth worker suspects contact with the family may not be beneficial for the young person, the situation should be discussed with the line manager before any decision to contact parents or carers is taken.

In all cases the youth worker should first negotiate any such contact with the young person concerned. **The welfare of the young person is the most important issue.**

Confidentiality

Good relationships between those working with young people and the young people themselves can depend to a large extent on a trust that confidentiality will be maintained. Therefore they need to be made fully aware of situations in which it may not be maintained. **It is essential that those working with young people understand the principles of confidentiality and are able to communicate this clearly to the young people in their care.**

In order to provide the best possible care for a young person it is important that they feel able to disclose their substance use and associated problems. Immediately informing the parents or police of such disclosures may result in young people failing to disclose and in doing so, increasing the risks and harm to which they could be exposed.

Many young people will be concerned about what will happen if they disclose substance use, so it is important to be clear. Ideally there should have been some discussions with the young person about confidentiality prior to any disclosure being made. If youth workers are not clear themselves they should seek advice and inform the young person as soon as possible.

Child Protection

The Children Act 1989, Section 47, states that "local authority must investigate where there is reasonable cause to suspect that a young person is likely to suffer 'significant harm' and that enquiries should be made to safeguard and promote the interests of the young person".

If the youth worker considers that a young person is at risk of significant harm the line manager must be informed and child protection procedures put into action.

Police and Confidentiality

The Health Advisory Service report highlighted:

'There is no legal requirement to report a criminal offence to the police, although a failure to disclose information might, in certain circumstances lead to an allegation of being an accessory to or aiding and abetting a crime. Local codes of conduct or practice, including those in schools may impose a duty on an employee to report an alleged offence to the employer, but authorities should still give careful consideration to the effect on the welfare of the child in reporting the offence to the police.'

The Police and Criminal Evidence Act (Section 116) offers the following guidance on what constitutes a 'serious arrestable offence' i.e. one which has caused or may cause:

- Serious harm to the security of the state or to public order
- Serious interference with the administration of justice or with investigation of an offence
- Serious injury
- Substantial financial gain or serious financial loss
- Death

Good Practice

- If the youth worker considers that the young person is at risk of 'significant harm' the line manager must be informed and child protection procedures put into action.
- It is important that young people understand early on in their contact with you what confidentiality means. Involving the young person in all the decision making processes around disclosure of information will help to maintain their trust, confidence and understanding in the support they are receiving.

Sensitive Information

Documents relating to interventions made with a young person have a degree of protection under the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 (PACE). Section 12 of the PACE Act concerns the protection of 'personal records' and defines them thus:

Documentary and other records concerning an individual (whether living or dead) who can be identified from them, and relating:

- a) to his/her physical or mental health
- b) to spiritual counselling or assistance given or to be given to him/her
- c) to counselling or assistance given to him/her, for the purpose of his/her personal welfare, by any voluntary organisation or by any individual who
 - i) by means of his/her office or occupation has responsibilities for his/her personal welfare; or
 - ii) by reason of his court order, has responsibilities for his/her supervision.

While this definition certainly applies to files such as client notes, it may not be true of other records - especially day-to-day records, incident logs etc. (Records that do not relate to health and welfare and are likely to, fall outside the category of 'excluded status'.)

Disclosure

A disclosure of substance use is a good opportunity to provide information, support and guidance to the young person. Undertaking a minimal risk assessment at this point will help workers to collect information to enable future support.

Good Practice

If you intend to share information with another party/parties you should tell the young person:

- Who you will be informing.
- What information you will be sharing.
- Why, and for what purpose, you will be sharing the information.

If you are passing information outside of your team, it is good practice to have the details written down. This should be written informally in young person friendly language and a copy given to the young person.

When a young person discloses substance use to a youth worker, there will be a number of factors to take into account before considering who to inform:

- The wishes and feelings of the young person. Possible consequences of the information being disclosed to other parties.
- The age and maturity of the young person.
- The welfare of the young person. Where there is a significant or immediate risk to the young person resulting from their substance misuse, it is more likely there will be an immediate need to inform the parents/guardians.

Dealing with Intoxication

Practice Guidelines

An intoxication situation may be present when a young person appears detached or aggressive, is behaviourally affected, is light headed or unsteady or displays rapid mood swings. *

- 1 Assess the risk to yourself and any other young people close by. Be aware of the dangers of handling needles and the risk of contact with blood. Involve other staff if necessary.
- 2 **DO NOT** try to question the young person in a confrontational way; there will be time for questions when the effects have worn off.
DO NOT allow the young person to wander. If they insist on leaving and you are unable to persuade them to stay, seek advice from the line manager. If you are unable to contact the line manager and are immediately concerned for the young person, then contact the police.
DO NOT give the young person tea or coffee as this may speed up the effects of substances.
- 3 Be aware that the symptoms may be a result of causes other than substance use.
- 4 If in doubt contact the emergency services.
- 5 Ask the young person and any others present what they have taken.
- 6 Assess the condition and behaviour of the young person.
- 7 Consider the need for:
 - medical attention
 - separation from other young people
 - supervision and monitoring of the young person
 - moving the young person to a quiet and safe place where they may become calm
- 8 When the incident is under control, consider who needs to be informed e.g. line manager, parent/carer, then record the incident and state what action you have taken.
- 9 Consider the needs of the other young people who may have witnessed or been involved with this incident.
- 10 T a k e time to recover, other staff may need to talk and have someone to listen to them.

* But please note that these are also the signs and symptoms associated with low blood sugar levels in people with diabetes (hypoglycaemia). If this is suspected, offer something to eat or a fizzy drink (not a 'light' or diet version).

Dealing with Emergencies

Practice Guidelines

An emergency exists when a young person:

- is unconscious
- has difficulty breathing
- is seriously confused or disorientated
- shows signs that he/she may have taken an overdose
- tells you it is an emergency

Stay calm and in control - be aware of first aid procedure take measures to protect yourself e.g. wear disposable gloves

- 1 Assess the situation. Ensure you are not in any danger.
- 2 If first aid qualified, apply first aid and immediately send for an ambulance.
- 3 If not first aid qualified, immediately send for an ambulance.
- 4 Be ready to state:
 - Location of incident
 - Brief description of symptoms
 - Gender and approximate age.

Any substances involved in the incident should be saved and given to the ambulance crew.

Whilst waiting for the ambulance - DO NOT PANIC:

DO collect any substance or vomit for medical analysis using protection, i.e. gloves.

DO NOT give anything by mouth like tea or coffee.

DO NOT induce vomiting

a) If Young Person Is Conscious

DO ask the young person what happened and try to identify any substance used. Get a description if you are not sure.

DO keep the young person warm and quiet.

DO talk to the young person to maintain consciousness, if possible lay them in the recovery position.

b) If Young Person Is Unconscious:

DO ensure that the young person is breathing and place into the recovery position

Make a note of the incident and what time the ambulance was called along with a brief description of the young person's condition.

DO NOT move the person unnecessarily.

DO NOT leave the young person unattended.

Ask the ambulance crew which hospital they will be taking the casualty to.

5 When the incident has been safely managed:

- Inform your line manager of the incident and what action has been taken if this has not already been done.
- Do not make assumptions about the person's medical condition.
- Report only facts i.e. "He/she has been taken by ambulance to ..."
- Contact the young person's parents or guardians.
- Record what has happened and what action has been taken.

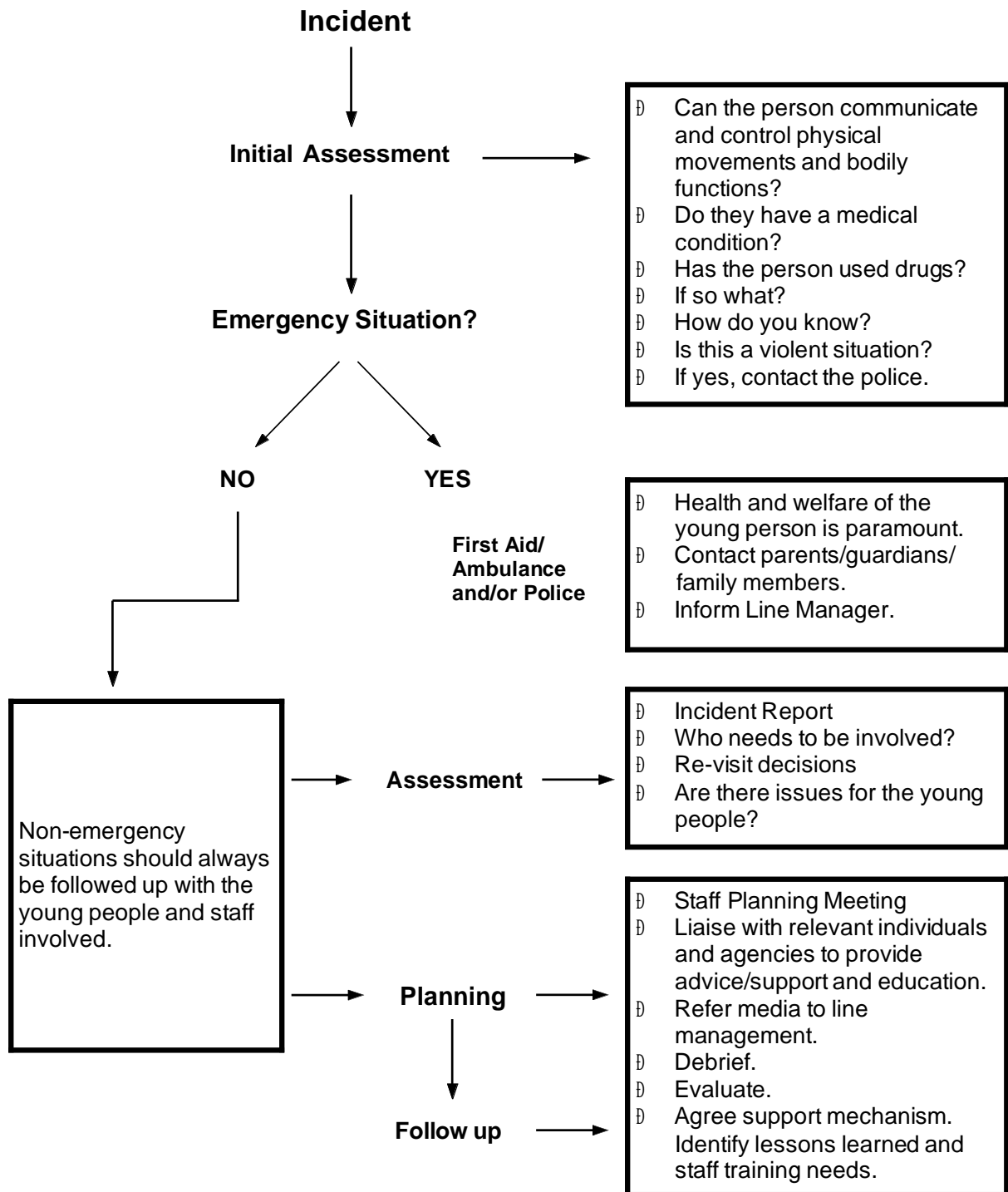
Dealing with any first aid incident is demanding and emotionally draining. Speak to a friend or your line manager - get it off your chest.

Dealing with an Incident

At all times —

The health and safety of the worker involved, the young person, other young people and workers is of paramount importance when deciding upon appropriate action to be taken.

This flow chart could form the basis of a training session with staff in the managing of incidents and in testing out unit policy. It is recommended that workers undertake training in First Aid procedures.



What you need to do

- Ensure that you work within the Drug Policy.
- If you are concerned that a prohibited activity might be taking place on the premises, you should always look into it further. If this confirms or supports your suspicion, you will need to take further action.

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