

# Roman Catholic Diocese of East Anglia



## Appendix 4

### GUIDANCE ON MANAGING DRUGS RELATED INCIDENTS

#### INTRODUCTION

It is vital that the Church sends a clear message to children and young people that the possession or use of illegal/unauthorised drugs during Church activities is unacceptable and will be dealt with firmly, promptly and fairly. Also, that legal drugs such as medicines need to be managed appropriately and unauthorised possession of a legal drug is not permitted.

#### DEFINITIONS

Drugs refers to **ALL DRUGS** including medicines, volatile substances, alcohol and tobacco.

Drugs incidents in Church activities are far more likely to involve tobacco, alcohol or volatile substances than illegal drugs.

#### BEHAVIOURAL GUIDELINES

Information about acceptable behaviour with regard to drugs should be provided to children and young people when behavioural guidelines are being drawn up for the event/activity. Children and young people should be given information about possible responses to drug related incidents. Parents and carers will be informed of any such incident.

Parents and carers should also be aware of this information and a written agreement entered into with them prior to the event that if their child is involved in a drugs incident and it is deemed necessary to send the child or young person home then the associated costs will need to be met by the parent/carer.

#### AUTHORISED DRUGS

Medicines or legal drugs such as tobacco are only legitimate in Church activities when they have been authorised by the event leader. Medicines should be managed systematically and be carefully stored/managed.

#### DEFINING DRUG INCIDENTS

An incident is likely to involve suspicions, observations, disclosures or discoveries of situations involving unauthorised drugs. It could fit into the following categories:

- Drugs or associated paraphernalia are found on Church premises/during Church activities.
- A child or young person is found in possession of drugs or associated paraphernalia.
- A child or young person is found to be a recognised source of supply of drugs on Church premises/during Church activities.
- A child or young person is thought to be under the influence of drugs.
- A leader has information that the illegitimate sale or supply of drugs is taking place in the local area.
- A child or young person discloses that they are misusing drugs.

#### DEALING WITH MEDICAL EMERGENCIES

In every case of an incident involving drugs, the Church must place the utmost priority on safety, meeting any medical emergencies with first aid and summoning medical help before addressing further issues. If the event leader is in doubt they should seek medical assistance immediately.

Unless they are unconscious, a child or young person may be intoxicated but no medical emergency may exist. Children and young people should be continually observed in case of changes in their condition. It is recommended that arrangements are made with a parent/carer for the child or young person to be collected or escorted home.

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## CONFISCATION AND DISPOSAL OF ILLEGAL DRUGS

It is an offence under Section 8 of the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 for the management of establishments to knowingly permit the supply and production of any illegal drugs on their premises.

The event leader should take temporary possession of any substance suspected of being an illegal drug for the purposes of protecting a child or young person from harm and to prevent an offence being committed in relation to that drug. The substance should be stored securely and arrangements made for its disposal without delay. An adult witness should be present when confiscations occur and a record should be kept of their details.

The event leader should not attempt to analyse or taste unknown or confiscated substances. If requested the police can advise on analysis, formal identification and disposal of illegal drugs.

## CONFISCATION OF OTHER UNAUTHORISED DRUGS

Parents and carers should always be informed of any incident where unauthorised drugs such as alcohol, tobacco, volatile substances and medicines have been confiscated.

They may be given the opportunity to collect any alcohol, tobacco or medicines that have been confiscated.

However, because of the level of danger posed by volatile substances, such as lighter fuel, glue or aerosols, the event leader may arrange for their safe disposal.

The police will not normally need to be involved in incidents involving legal drugs, but the event leader may wish to inform Trading Standards or the police about the inappropriate sale or supply of alcohol, tobacco or volatile substances to children and young people in the locality.

## ESTABLISHING THE NATURE OF AN INCIDENT

The event leader should conduct a careful evaluation to judge the nature and seriousness of each incident. **This may involve informing and consulting others as necessary e.g. the Police.**

A range of factors may be relevant and need exploration to determine the seriousness and needs of those involved and an appropriate response. For example:

- Is the Drug legal or illegal?
- Is this a first or subsequent incident?
- What quantity of the drug was involved?
- Does the child or young person admit or deny allegations?

## RESPONSES

A range of options is available to the event leader when responding to the needs of those involved in a drugs related incident. Although not an exhaustive list possible responses include:

- Re-emphasis on behavioural guidelines.
- Drug education.
- Closer supervision.
- Referral to an external agency (in conjunction with parent/carer).
- Removal from a part of the event/activity.
- Permanent exclusion.

Responses should always aim to provide children and young people with the opportunity to learn from their mistakes and to develop as individuals. Any sanctions should always be justified in terms of:

- The seriousness of the incident.
- The identified need of the child or young person, other children and young people and the Church community.
- Consulting with agreed codes of behaviour and disciplinary action for breaches of other rules.

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## CONFIDENTIALITY

The event leader and other leaders cannot and should not promise total confidentiality to a child or young person who discloses drug use. They should seek advice from the Diocesan Safeguarding Co-ordinator/Officer/Adviser in such cases.

The child or young person might be directed to sources of confidential information and advice external to the event/activity.

## RECORDING AN INCIDENT

The event leader should make a full record of every drugs related incident using the Incident Report Form (**Form CaSE 6**).

## INFORMING PARENTS/CARERS

In any incident involving drugs, the event leader must involve the child or young person's parent/carer and explain how the incident was managed and agree a way forward.

## OVERSEAS TRIPS

For overseas trips, it is important to bear in mind that the law on drugs will differ from country to country. It is advisable that the event leader is aware of these regulations prior to departure.

Parents and carers should be advised, and their written agreement be sought, if the law of the country to be visited permits drug use which would otherwise be illegal in England and Wales. If drug use is permitted in the country to be visited, boundaries around the use of the drug e.g. alcohol, must be set with the children and young people within the behavioural guidelines established for that event.

