

Developing a Drug Policy

There are many reasons for a church to develop a Drugs Policy. Many statutory and voluntary organisations have one, as it is useful to have discussed what the approach to drug use etc. will be, and have a considered response, rather than just reacting if something happens. The information below is to help you get started – you will have other thoughts/policies that will be relevant to the development of your own policy. (Some points are adapted from 'Guidance for schools', DfES)

1 A DRUGS POLICY WILL HELP YOU TO KNOW:

- the church's general approach to drugs
- the priorities of the church with regards to drugs
- the role of the church in relation to all drug matters
- the role of the church in contributing to local and national drug strategies
- legal requirements and responsibilities of the church
- how to respond to incidents and have a framework for action
- what to include in a drug education programme
- how to achieve Health and Safety with regards to drugs
- rules for staff in managing medical drugs
- how effective the church is in drug prevention and intervention

2 HOW TO GET STARTED:

- Read through other policies, like your Health and Safety Policy
- Discuss why you need a drug policy
- Decide who should be involved in the process (development and consultation) – involve as many as possible!
- Read summaries of Government and local strategies
- Define what you mean by 'drugs' and other key terms

3 WHAT TO INCLUDE:

- Illegal drugs and recreational drugs you decide are not acceptable within the church
- Management of medical drugs, if relevant (what drugs, member of staff in charge)
- Action to be taken if drugs were found at the church, or if someone was suspected to be under the influence of drugs
- Criteria for when police/other agencies should be involved
- Possible areas of support to people needing help if their drug use is harming them or others (for example, how would someone choosing to not drink alcohol as part of their recovery participate in communion if you use alcoholic wine?)
- Aim and structure of drug education (for staff and for those you work with)
- How to maintain health and safety for people working at or using your building (if you have one)
- Issues of confidentiality
- Anything else relevant to the church's response to/prevention of drugs
- Roles – who will be responsible for what? (e.g. Safeguarding person, first aiders)
- Record keeping – how will you record any incidents? And how will you keep this data safe and legal?
- Evaluation and review of the policy

4 WHAT TO DO ONCE YOU HAVE WRITTEN AND AGREED THE POLICY:

- Sign the policy (if possible, please send a copy to Hope UK!)
- Make sure everyone knows about the policy and decide if any training is needed
- Design and circulate any forms/records you need – for example for recording drug-related incidents
- Refer to the policy (= don't forget it's there!)
- Include Drugs Policy in induction for new staff and volunteers
- Review regularly (decide who is responsible for this and a date for review) to evaluate the effectiveness of the policy in drug prevention and intervention

Things to think about:

5 ILLEGAL DRUGS:

Section 8 Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 says:

A person commits an offence if, being the occupier or concerned in the management of any premises, he knowingly permits or suffers any of the following activities to take place on those premises. That is to say:

- a) producing or attempting to produce a controlled drug
- b) supplying or attempt to supply a controlled drug to another, or offering to supply a controlled drug to another
- c) administration or use of any controlled drug.

This means you have to have a policy about what you will do if you find/suspect drug use/possession/supply anywhere within the church property – including car park, garden, etc. You have to take steps to stop things occurring, you can't turn a 'blind eye'.

If you confiscate drugs you also need to have decided how you will manage this – how will you dispose of them, who should be told, where will you record it etc.?

6 LEGAL DRUGS:

Medicines – Your policy may need to include written procedures for managing and administering medication to children and young people (for example, on residential trips). The government has useful guidance about this – currently at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/supporting-pupils-at-school-with-medical-conditions--3> (July, 2018).

You are advised to consider the following:

- Ensure staff and volunteers receive appropriate training beforehand from a medically qualified person
- Check that your insurance arrangements fully indemnify staff and volunteers against claims for alleged negligence
- Make sure you have sufficient numbers of staff and volunteers trained to cover for possible absences

Drug Policy for Churches

- Think carefully about what kinds of medication your staff and volunteers will be able to administer. No all medication is administered orally. Two adults (preferably the same gender as the child) should be present and records should be kept
- All staff and volunteers should know how to call the emergency services
- Children should not be taken to hospital in staff cars. Allegations of negligence may be made if a seriously ill child is placed unsupervised in a vehicle without medical support. An ambulance should be called

Alcohol, cigarettes, vaping, solvents and other legal recreational substances – Although using these substances is legal, there may be other legislation you need to take into consideration – for example the sale of alcohol (e.g. Licensing Act 2005) or laws around smoking indoors. You should consider what your guidelines for consumption of these substances on your premises (including a car park/garden/similar) might be.

What will your policy be about people turning up to an event under the influence of a substance (e.g. drunk)? How will you ensure their safety? And that of others?

7 POLICIES TO CONSIDER/REFER TO:

When drawing up your Drug Policy, you will need to take the following into consideration:

- Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 (quoted above)
- Drugs Act 2005
- Psychoactive Substances Act 2015
- Local authority and national drug strategies
- Safeguarding Policy and Procedures
- Health and Safety policy and procedures
- Confidentiality and Information Sharing policy and procedures

There may be other legislation or your own internal policies that are relevant – this is not a complete list.

8 TRAINING NEEDS:

Discussion about this policy may lead you to conclude that you need training. Areas you may require training in include:

- What to do in an emergency
- What to do if you find or suspect drug use/possession on the premises
- Providing medication to children (if this is relevant for you)
- Prevention and intervention methods (Hope UK may be able to help you with this)

9 INFORMATION YOU MAY NEED TO RESEARCH:

As part of drawing up this policy, you will want to know:

- Any relevant policies relating to your local authority
- Local organisations providing help and support
- Drug-related issues in your local area

10 POSSIBLE DEFINITIONS:

Drug – any substance that users put into their body that changes the way their mind or body works, including legal substances like tobacco and alcohol.

Client – anyone using the services provided by your church.

Worker – anyone employed by or volunteering for your church.

11 HOW TO CHECK YOUR POLICY:

Once you have written a draft, you might like to check it in the following ways:

- 1) Think of some possible scenarios (a person comes to church drunk with their children...) and see if your policy addresses these scenarios.
- 2) Ask another church/organisation to check your policy – maybe you can do the same for them.
- 3) Hope UK is also happy to look through it for you.

Drug Policy for Churches

- 4) Check it against your existing policies, to make sure it doesn't clash with any.
- 5) Go online and read other policies from other organisations – this may highlight something you haven't thought about.