

Drugs and Substance Misuse Policy

Review Schedule:

This policy will be reviewed annually; however, it may be reviewed sooner if necessary.

Staff Acknowledgment:

All staff will read, understand, and sign this policy yearly and when changes are made in accordance with government and DfE guidelines.

Document Control:

- **Date Updated:**
- **Next Review Date:**
- **Approval:**

Change History

Date	Description of change	Signed

Policy Statement: At Alternative Acres, the welfare and well-being of all our children, staff, and community members are of utmost importance. As a therapy farm providing an alternative provision, we are committed to creating a safe, healthy, and supportive environment where children can thrive. This policy outlines our approach to preventing and addressing drug and substance misuse, ensuring that our community is safeguarded from harm.

Aims:

- To educate children about the dangers and consequences of drug and substance misuse.
- To provide clear guidance on how to manage any incidents of drug and substance misuse within the Alternative Acres setting.

- To promote healthy, positive behaviours and support children in making informed choices.
- To ensure that staff are trained and equipped to handle drug-related incidents in line with safeguarding procedures.

Definitions: For the purposes of this policy, the term "drugs" includes:

- Any illegal substance, such as cannabis, ecstasy, cocaine, heroin, etc.
- Legal substances that are misused, such as prescription drugs, over-the-counter medications, and volatile substances (e.g., glue, solvents).
- Alcohol and tobacco products.
- Psychoactive substances (previously known as "legal highs").
- Substances misused for their intoxicating effects, including vaping products.

Prevention and Education: At Alternative Acres, we believe that prevention through education is key to reducing the risk of drug misuse. We will:

- Integrate drug and substance misuse education into our curriculum, using age-appropriate materials that focus on the risks, laws, and consequences of misuse.
- Emphasise the importance of mental, emotional, and physical well-being through various activities and therapeutic interactions with animals and nature.
- Encourage open and honest discussions around drugs and substances, reducing stigma and empowering children to make informed choices.
- Provide ongoing training to staff to ensure they have the knowledge and skills to effectively educate and support children.

Roles and Responsibilities:

- **Management Team:** Ensure that all staff are aware of and follow this policy. They will also oversee drug education programs and take lead on any drug-related incidents.
- **Staff:** Must be vigilant and report any concerns regarding substance misuse. They will be trained to recognize the signs of misuse and how to support affected children.
- **Children:** Are encouraged to engage in discussions, seek help if they have concerns about substance misuse, and contribute to creating a positive, drug-free environment.
- **Parents/Carers:** Will be informed about our approach to drug and substance misuse and are encouraged to work with us to support their child's well-being.

Managing Drug and Substance Misuse Incidents: If a drug or substance misuse incident occurs, the following procedures will be followed:

1. **Immediate Response:** The safety and well-being of the child and others will be prioritised. If necessary, medical assistance will be sought.
2. **Investigation:** The incident will be investigated by senior staff, ensuring fairness and sensitivity. Confidentiality will be maintained as much as possible, but safeguarding principles will take precedence.

3. **Parent/Carer Involvement:** Parents/carers will be informed at the earliest opportunity if their child is involved in a drug or substance misuse incident.
4. **Commissioners:** Commissioners will be informed at the earliest opportunity.
5. **Support:** The child involved will be provided with appropriate support, which may include counselling, mentoring, or referral to external services.
6. **Consequences:** Depending on the nature of the incident, appropriate action will be taken in line with our behaviour management policy. This may include restorative approaches, suspension, or other measures designed to support the child's rehabilitation.
7. **Recording and Reporting:** All incidents will be recorded in accordance with our safeguarding procedures. If the incident involves illegal substances, the police will be notified where appropriate.

Safeguarding: If a child is found to be under the influence of drugs or in possession of illegal substances, the situation will be treated as a safeguarding concern. The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) will be informed, and safeguarding procedures will be followed, including referral to external agencies if required.

Support for Vulnerable Children: Children at Alternative Acres may be more vulnerable to the risks of drug and substance misuse. We recognise that substance misuse may be a symptom of underlying issues such as trauma, abuse, or mental health difficulties. In such cases, we will take a holistic approach, addressing the root causes through individualised care, therapy, and support.

Confidentiality: While confidentiality is important, it cannot be guaranteed if there is a risk to the safety and well-being of the child or others. Information may need to be shared with external agencies, such as social services or the police, in line with our safeguarding policy.

Monitoring and Review: This policy will be reviewed annually or following any significant incidents to ensure it remains effective and up to date with legislation and best practice.

By ensuring the safety, education, and well-being of our children at Alternative Acres, we aim to foster a supportive, drug-free environment where every child can achieve their full potential.