

Education Procedure Manual 3/22

GUIDELINES FOR THE MANAGEMENT OF INCIDENTS OF DRUG MISUSE IN SCHOOLS

**For
Teachers and Employees on Scottish Negotiating Committee
for Teachers (SNCT) Conditions of Service**

Effective from: July 2026

Education, People & Business 

This document can be provided in large print, Braille or on audio format and can be translated into other community languages. Please contact the Council's Corporate Communications Team at:
East Dunbartonshire Council, 12 Strathkelvin Place, Southbank, Kirkintilloch G66 1TJ
Tel: 0300 123 4510

本文件可按要求翻譯成中文，如有此需要，請電 0300 123 4510。

اس دستاویز کا درخواست کرنے پر (اردو) زبان میں ترجمہ کیا جاسکتا ہے۔ براہ مہربانی فون نمبر 0300 123 4510 پر رابطہ کریں۔

ਇਸ ਦਸਤਾਵੇਜ਼ ਦਾ ਮੰਗ ਕਰਨ ਤੇ ਪੰਜਾਬੀ ਵਿੱਚ ਅਨੁਵਾਦ ਕੀਤਾ ਜਾ ਸਕਦਾ ਹੈ। ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ 0300 123 4510 ਫੋਨ ਕਰੋ।

Gabhaidh an sgriobhainn seo cur gu Gàidhlig ma tha sin a dhìth oirbh. Cuiribh fòn gu 0300 123 4510

अनुरोध करने पर यह दस्तावेज़ हिन्दी में भाषांतरित किया जा सकता है। कृपया 0300 123 4510 पर फ़ोन कीजिए।

Contents

Version Control History 3
GDPR Statement..... 3
Policy Review Statement 3
1.0 Purpose Error! Bookmark not defined.
2.0 Scope..... 5
3.0 References & Related Documentation 5
4.0 Procedure..... Error! Bookmark not defined.

Guidelines for the Management of Incidents of Drug Misuse in Schools

Version Control History

Version No.	Effective Date	Details of change from previous version	Date Approved	New version no.
-	Aug 2002	Transfer to new template Guidelines reviewed and updated in line with updated/new legislation.	19/06/26	1.0

GDPR Statement

East Dunbartonshire Council holds, uses and processes information in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulations and all other relevant national data protection laws. Further information detailing how East Dunbartonshire holds and uses personal information and copies of privacy notices used throughout the Council are available on our [website](#).

Policy Review Statement

This policy will be reviewed in line with:

- Legislative Change
- Changes to SNCT National Conditions of Service
- Other external factors
- Feedback on the effectiveness of the policy
- Requests for review by Elected Members, Trade Unions and/or Management.

1.0 Core Principles and Legal Framework

- 1.1 This policy is grounded in the **UNCRC (Incorporation) (Scotland) Act 2024** and the **Standards in Scotland's Schools etc. Act 2000**, which mandates that schools be "health-promoting" environments.
- **Public Health Approach:** Substance use is recognised as a wider public health issue. It often signals underlying distress, unmet needs, or trauma.
 - **Behaviour as Communication:** Incidents are viewed as distress signals related to a pupil's wider circumstances rather than purely disciplinary matters.
 - **Rights-Based:** Every pupil has the right to a safe learning environment, to be treated with dignity, and to have their views heard.
- 1.2 The primary goal is to provide a **safe, consistent, and inclusive learning environment** where every child feels they belong. This policy follows a **public health approach**, recognising that substance use often signals wider distress, unmet needs, or trauma in a young person's life.



- 1.3 The Framework to Reduce the Use of and Harm from Alcohol and Drugs (Scottish Government/COSLA 2019) describes the roles of Alcohol and Drug Partnerships and governance within integration authorities.

Incidents of drug misuse could place a pupil at significant risk and/or in need of multiagency support, there are several references to the advice/guidance given in Child Protection Procedures and Guidelines: Responsibilities of the Education Service in Protecting Children from Abuse (East Dunbartonshire Council, Dec. 2023).

Substance Use (formerly referred to as drug misuse) includes the use of controlled substances under the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971, as well as solvents, alcohol, and tobacco.

2.0 Scope

- 2.1 This revised **Guidelines for the Management of Incidents of Drug Misuse in Schools** is underpinned by the **2026 National Guidance** and the **East Dunbartonshire Child Protection Procedures (PM 3/21)**. It replaces all previous guidance, including the 2000 Scottish Executive guidelines and outdated local circular.
- 2.2 These Guidelines apply to all staff in all EDC Educational Establishments.

3.0 References & Related Documentation

- 3.1 The following documents should be referenced when considering this procedure:
- [SNCT Handbook](#)
 - [Equalities Act 2010](#)
 - [Getting it right for every child \(GIRFEC\) Practice Guidance 4 - Information sharing - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](#)
 - **UNCRC (Incorporation) (Scotland) Act 2024**
 - **Standards in Scotland's Schools etc. Act 2000**
 - Framework to Reduce the Use of and Harm from Alcohol and Drugs (Scottish Government/COSLA 2019)
 - Child Protection Procedures and Guidelines: Responsibilities of the Education Service in Protecting Children from Abuse (East Dunbartonshire Council, Dec. 2002).
 - Misuse of Drugs Act 1971
 - Rights, Respect and Recovery (Scottish Government 2018)
 - Alcohol Framework (Scottish Government 2018).
 - [PM 3/21 Child Protection Procedures](#)

4.0 Defining Substances and Incidents

- 4.1 Defining substances is mandatory to set clear expectations for the school community.
- **Illegal Substances:** Drugs controlled under the *Misuse of Drugs Act 1971*.
 - **Age-Restricted Products:** Alcohol, tobacco, and vapes/nicotine products. These are **inappropriate for all pupils** on school grounds, including those aged.
 - **Prescription Medication:** Includes the use of medications by individuals for whom they were not prescribed.
- 4.2 All incidents must be reported to the **Designated Person** (usually the Head Teacher) as a matter of urgency.

5.0 Wellbeing and Early Identification

- 5.1 Staff should be alert to changes in wellbeing, such as sudden changes in overall behaviour, communication, declines in performance, excessive tiredness, attendance

patterns etc.

- **Behaviour as Communication:** Warning signs (e.g., temper outbreaks or truancy) should be viewed as distress signals related to the pupil's wider circumstances.
- **Coping Mechanisms:** Some pupils use substances to manage anxiety, self-harm, or underlying trauma.
- **Non-Stigmatising Approach:** Staff must use language that avoids "labelling" pupils, ensuring they feel safe seeking help.

5.2 Medical Emergency Management

- **Immediate Action:** If a pupil is unconscious or has breathing difficulties, staff must provide first aid and call **999** immediately.
- **Harm Reduction:** Schools should follow local protocols and contact emergency services as required.
- **Parental Notification:** If a pupil is under the influence but does not require an ambulance, a member of the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) should contact parents/carers to collect them for home monitoring or medical review.

5.3 Child Protection and Safeguarding

Substance use incidents must be cross-referenced with local child protection themes:

- **Parental Substance Misuse:** Staff must be alert to children living with parental addiction, which may lead to emotional/physical neglect or inappropriately high levels of responsibility for the child.
- Staff should have information shared with them appropriate to their role, in being alert to children living with parental addiction, which may lead to emotional/physical neglect or inappropriately high levels of responsibility for the child.
- Staff must be alert to children living with parental addiction, which may lead to emotional/physical neglect or inappropriately high levels of responsibility for the child. Parental alcohol and drug use overlaps and intersects with domestic abuse, neglect, emotional abuse and parental mental ill health as dominant reasons for child protection registration and the need for children to be looked after. There is a strong link between problem drug and alcohol use, deprivation, and trauma. In this context compassion, understanding and workforce resilience are essential within effective child protection.
- **Exploitation:** If staff suspect a young person is being **exploited or trafficked** (e.g., "County Lines"), they must follow the child protection referral process immediately 16.
- **Adults Under the Influence:** If a parent/carer arrives at school under the influence of substances, staff must prioritise the child's safety, seek an alternative carer, and contact

Guidelines for the Management of Incidents of Drug Misuse in Schools

Social Work Advice and Response if the child is at risk. A request for assistance or notification of concern (depending on the risk) should be made to social work.

5.4 Confidentiality and Trust

- **No Absolute Secrecy:** Staff **cannot pledge absolute confidentiality**.
- **Mandatory Sharing:** Consent for information sharing is **overridden** if the school assesses a child to be at actual or potential risk. It is essential that consideration is given to how information can best be exchanged and shared with the individual in a position of trust and whether information should not be shared if this may jeopardise a police investigation or place the child or young person, or any other child or young person, at risk of significant harm. Guidance on information sharing can be found at [Getting it right for every child \(GIRFEC\) Practice Guidance 4 - Information sharing - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot/publications/practice-guidance/4-information-sharing/pages/1-introduction.aspx).
- **Transparency:** Staff should explain to the pupil why information must be shared with the Child Protection Coordinator to ensure the pupil receives the right support.

5.5 Wellbeing Conversations

All interactions should be **non-oppressive, non-judgmental, and supportive**.

- **Rights-Based:** Pupils have a right to silence and reasonable privacy.
- **GIRFEC Integration:** Conversations should use the **SHANARRI indicators** (Safe, Healthy, Achieving, Nurtured, Active, Respected, Responsible, Included) to assess the support needed.
- **Confidentiality:** Staff cannot pledge absolute secrecy if a child is at risk but should explain why information must be shared to maintain trust.

6.0 Managing Substances and Legal Considerations

- 6.1 The national approaches to alcohol and drug harms are outlined in Rights, Respect and Recovery (Scottish Government 2018) and the Alcohol Framework (Scottish Government 2018). Article 33 of the UNCRC addresses the wider impact on children of harmful drug use.

Incidents include possession, use, or supply on school premises, trips, or transport, and the discovery of drug-related litter

- 6.2 **No Statutory Right to Search:** School staff **do not have a right to search pupils**. They may ask a pupil to show the contents of pockets or bags, but if the pupil refuses and illegal drugs are suspected, **Police Scotland must be contacted**.
- 6.3 **Handling Substances:** Staff may take temporary possession of a substance to prevent harm **but must not put themselves or others at risk in doing so and the recommendation would be the police are contacted**. Evidence removal must be witnessed, logged, and stored securely until handed to the police.

Guidelines for the Management of Incidents of Drug Misuse in Schools

6.4 **Refusal to Comply:** If a pupil refuses to show bags/pockets and **illegal drugs** are suspected, **Police Scotland must be contacted**. Introductory training tools and graphics may be accessed at (Adley/UK Drugwatch 2017).

7.0 Inclusion and Support (The "Team Around the Child")

Exclusion must be a last resort, used only when all other preventative and supportive measures are exhausted.

- **Support-First:** Schools should prioritise **counselling, pastoral support, and restorative conversations** over punitive sanctions.
- **Multi-Agency Planning:** Schools will work with social work and health partners to create a **Child's Plan/Action Plan and/or Risk Assessment** that addresses and supports root causes.
- **Post-Incident Care:** Pupils should receive increased supervision and reassurance as they may feel extremely vulnerable following an incident.

8.0 Recording and Monitoring

8.1 **Accurate Recording:** All incidents must be recorded accurately and immediately. East Dunbartonshire schools must use the electronic reporting form and record the event on **Seemis as a Significant Event** to ensure it is captured in the pupil's confidential chronology. Form FO1 should also be completed and stored in the pupil's Child Protection file.

8.2 **Parental Partnership:** Parents and carers are **essential partners** and should be involved early to agree on practical supports.

8.3 **Media and Community:** Media enquiries must be directed to the Head Teacher and the Education Authority's communications office; staff must not make independent comments; the Chief Education Officer and Quality Improvement Managers must be made aware.

8.4 **Authority Oversight:** Education authorities will use this data to identify common areas of concern in terms of contextualised safeguarding such as toilets or social areas, and inform wider prevention strategies.