

Drugs, Alcohol & Substance Misuse *(Learners)* Policy & Procedure 2026- 2028

Author:	Name	Stephen Musa	
	Job Title	Deputy Principal	
Procedure approved by:	SLT	Date approved:	10.09.26

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 The College aims to be a welcoming, inclusive college for all who learn or use its services. It has a positive policy of equality and diversity and strives to support learners wherever possible. It also has a duty of care to staff, learners and visitors and must endeavour to ensure that their wellbeing and health and safety are a priority at all times. Occasionally a learner or potential learner's behaviour in relation to alcohol or drugs may impact upon their own or others' ability to fulfil their potential, which may result in the implementation of this policy or other related procedures.
- 1.2 The College considers that, to provide a safe and healthy working environment and to comply with statutory requirements, the consumption of alcohol or the use of drugs or misuse of substances whilst attending College is unacceptable. The College has a zero-tolerance policy towards the misuse of substances. The possession of drugs or any substance with the intention to misuse or supply is strictly forbidden. Possession of paraphernalia associated with drugs is also forbidden.
- 1.3 Learners must not attend College or participate in College activities under the influence of drugs, alcohol or substances (including misuse of legally prescribed drugs). The onus is on staff and learners to report any concerns they may have or observe.

2. Aims of the Policy

2.1 The aims of this policy are to ensure that everyone who works and learns at the College achieves their full potential safely and to support members of staff in how to deal with a substance-related incident in an appropriate manner.

4.1 The policy also aims to ensure that learners:

- are prepared for entry to their chosen profession.
- have developed and can maintain professional attitudes, both in and outside College;
- are aware of the risks of drug and alcohol abuse.
- develop their knowledge, understanding, skills and attitudes about drugs to help them make healthy and informed choices.

3. Scope of the Policy

3.1 This policy applies to all learners irrespective of their method of application or enrolment or their type of study including those on further education, school links and apprenticeship programmes, studying either full-time or part-time, whilst attending a College centre or at a College-approved placement.

3.2 It applies to learner behaviours both on the College site and in external settings including trips, College transport, work placement and social media. It applies to learners on campus and outside College grounds within the learner's normal College hours and to guests of learners whilst on College grounds.

3.3 This Policy does not relate to drug or alcohol misuse by College staff. This is addressed separately within the Drugs and Alcohol Policy for staff.

4. Definitions

4.1 The term 'drugs', unless otherwise stated, is used to refer to all drugs:

- All illegal drugs (those controlled by the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971)
- All legal drugs, including alcohol, tobacco, volatile substances (those giving off a gas or vapor which can be inhaled such as aerosols, nitrous oxide cannisters, lighter fluid)
- New Psychoactive Substances, previously known as 'Legal Highs'
- Alkyl nitrites (known as poppers)
- All over the counter and prescription medicine.

4.2 Drug paraphernalia is equipment, products and materials of any kind which are used, intended for use, or designed for use, in producing, processing, preparing, testing, analysing, packaging, repackaging or storing illegal drugs. This includes, but is not limited to:

- Herbal/vegetative matter grinders
- Pipes/improvised smoking vessels
- Items to store/conceal drugs

- 4.3 The Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 is the main law to control and classify drugs that are 'dangerous or otherwise harmful' when misused. The act lists all illegal (or controlled) drugs in the UK and divides them into one of 3 'classes' – A, B and C – based on the harm they cause to individuals and society.

5. Help and Support

5.1 Learners can obtain support, further guidance and help, via their Progress Tutor or from a member of the Learner Wellbeing team.

5.2 Learners who are in receipt of support from a substance misuse agency will be supported by the College.

5.3 Any learner who informs a member of staff that they have a drugs or alcohol problem and would like support to overcome their problem will be supported by the College to access support. Where appropriate a screening tool can be used to assess suitability for the service. Specialist substance misuse agencies can support learners in their recovery and to live to their full potential. They can offer advice and support, recovery coaches, health and care staff such as doctors and nurses, as well as access to medications which can stop the effects of an overdose.

5.4 Drugs use can be a symptom of other problems and the College will strive to provide high quality support and advice on any drug related safeguarding issue, and as appropriate put in place necessary safeguarding measures.

5.5 If a learner informs a member of staff of substance misuse dependency, or of a friend's or relative's problem they should be referred to the Learner Wellbeing Team for support. Where a parent, carer or family member's substance misuse issues are having a significant impact upon them or another child this may be a Safeguarding issue.

6. Drugs, Alcohol and Substance Misuse Procedures

6.1 Both staff and learners have a responsibility to report anyone they perceive to be under the influence or in possession of drugs or alcohol.

6.2 Each learner is responsible for their own actions.

6.3 Learners who are found to be under the influence will, in the absence of mitigating circumstances, be deemed to be committing an act of gross misconduct and subject to the College's disciplinary procedures (Positive Behaviour Policy). Similarly, any learner found to be taking, buying, selling or be in possession of drugs/drugs paraphernalia will face disciplinary action and a report may be made to the Police. Parents/carers may be informed, and arrangements will be made for them to go home and/or to seek medical attention.

6.4 If a learner is suspected of being under the influence of drugs or alcohol on College premises, the College must prioritise the safety of the learner and those around them. If necessary, it should be dealt as a medical emergency, administering first aid and summoning appropriate support. The College has the right to request the learner leave the premises where there is a suspicion of

being under the influence, even where no evidence is found. This is to ensure the safety of the learner and others around them.

6.5 Where a learner's behaviour is considered to present as a behaviour issue, the College's Positive Behaviour Policy will be evoked. Depending on the specific circumstances the outcome will vary, but may result in disciplinary action, or learners being referred for further support and / or counselling as appropriate.

6.6 In some cases, a Fitness to Study Risk Assessment may be deemed necessary.

6.7 If a learner is part of a School Links / Taster Programme, the schools' liaison co-ordinator, member of the senior leadership team and a member of the safeguarding team must be informed. The Safeguarding team will then liaise with the schools safeguarding. Learners with substance misuse issues may be referred for specialist support as appropriate.

7. Searching and Confiscation

7.1 Staff authorised by the Principal have a statutory power to carry out consensual and non-consensual personal searches including possessions and storage facilities if they have reasonable grounds for suspecting the learner possesses a prohibited item such as alcohol or drugs, as set out in the Searching, Screening and Confiscation Policy and Procedures.

7.2 If a member of staff suspects a learner has a prohibited item in their possession, they can instruct the learner to turn out their pockets or bags, following which a Learner Wellbeing Officer should be contacted.

7.3 All College staff can seize any prohibited item found. Any items found should be passed to the Learner Wellbeing Team for temporary storage. Illegal items should be stored securely in order to be collected by the Police if appropriate or disposed of. A record of all searches will be recorded on ProMonitor as a Confidential Comment.

8. Procedure for Seized Drugs and/or Drugs Paraphernalia

8.1 The Director Learner Wellbeing /Learner Wellbeing Manager or a Learner Wellbeing Officer must be contacted. They will arrange for the safe removal, recording and storage in a secure, locked storage area. The labelled evidence bag and the electronic record shall include the details of the date and time of the seizure/find and names of any witnesses present.

8.2 Staff are advised that it is not acceptable for them to remain in possession of any such substances for any period of time as to do so would constitute an offence under the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971.

8.4 The Learner Wellbeing Team shall notify the Police without delay who will then collect the suspected drugs and then store or dispose of them in line with locally agreed protocols.

8.5 The member of staff responsible for seizing or finding the suspected drugs shall record full details of the incident via a Confidential Comment on ProMonitor. Any drug should be described in terms of appearance as well as any suspected readily identifiable name.

8.6 The Learner Wellbeing Officer shall inform the learner's parents/carers if under 18 years old. Safeguarding protocols should be followed.

9. Awareness and Training

9.1 Staff should be aware that the misuse of drugs or alcohol by learners might come to light in various ways.

9.2 For further information and advice please contact the Learner Wellbeing Team on 01704 392821.

9.3 Training will be provided to relevant staff, for example Duty Principal, Student Services staff, Learner Wellbeing officers, Security and Progress Tutors, as required.

9.4 The College provides / raises learner awareness of drugs and alcohol misuse through:

- Progress tutor sessions
- Awareness events
- External speakers
- Access to information and advice
- Close links with relevant external agencies
- Access to counselling (as appropriate)

10. Vulnerable Learners

10.1 The College is aware that some learners may be particularly vulnerable to drug misuse and other social problems. In some cases, the College may be the first opportunity for learners to receive drug education and support. Vulnerable learners could include:

- Young people who are cared for, care experienced, who have previously been cared for or have a social worker.
- Learners who have previously been excluded from school.
- Learners with additional learning needs.
- Learners with mental health problems.
- Learners in contact with the justice system.
- Those who live with substance-misusing parents/carers.
- Young people who are homeless or at risk of being involved in criminal / sexual exploitation/county lines/OCG/trafficking/modern slavery.
- Peer on Peer abuse.
- Learners who have experienced significant trauma in their lives and have experienced ACES (Adverse Childhood Experiences).

10.2 The College aims to ensure that vulnerable learners are identified at the earliest opportunity and are enabled to receive appropriate support from key staff and referrals into appropriate agencies. Specialist support is also available to learners where the issue is in relation to parental substance misuse.

10.3 Any learners identified as requiring support for exploitation will be supported through the College Safeguarding procedure, with appropriate referrals to external services being made.

The college will also consider where appropriate requesting a referral into the National Referral Mechanism.

11. Confidentiality

11.1 All personal and sensitive information will be managed in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) and the Common Law Duty of Confidentiality.

11.2 There may be occasion where the College is obliged to disclose information, notwithstanding that the learner has refused consent:

- Where the learner's behaviour threatens their safety or safeguarding, and that of others;
- Or where the College would be liable to civil or criminal liability for failure to disclose.

12. Monitoring, Review and Evaluation

12.1 This Policy, along with any incident reports, will be monitored through the Health and Safety Committee to ensure its effective operation.

13. Related Policies and Procedures

13.1 Southport Education Group's Learner Drug and Alcohol Policy has been developed in accordance with:

- The Misuse of Drugs Act 1971
- Drugscope: Guidance for Further Education Colleges
- Drugs: Guidance for Schools (DfES 2004)
- Psychoactive Substances Act 2016

13.2 Where it is felt to be more appropriate this policy can be used alongside of, or instead of, other College procedures including:

- Admissions Policy
- Positive Behaviour Policy
- Safeguarding Policy and Procedures
- Sexual Violence & Sexual Harassment Policy
- Mental Health Policy and Procedures
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy
- Fitness to Study and Practise Policy and Procedures
- Health and Safety Policy
- Searching, Screening and Confiscation Policy and Procedures
- Medical Needs and Medication Policy

14. Specialist Support Services

- Southport College Learner Counselling Service – 01704 392720
- Alcoholics Anonymous – 0800 9177 650, www.alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk
- Frank – 0300 123 6600, www.talktofrank.com

- Change Grow Live- <https://www.changegrowlive.org/sefton/info> 0151 318 2804 (support for children and young people with drug and alcohol issues). Adult Service-0151 203 9755.