



14th July 2021

Dear Colleague,

Safer Options' Education Inclusion Managers, in collaboration with Bristol City Council and Avon and Somerset Constabulary, are working to clarify Bristol's response to incidents in which pupils are found in possession of a controlled drug on a school site.

Over the last 3 academic years, Bristol students have missed over 970 days of education due to fixed term exclusions, which are linked to drugs and alcohol. Inconsistencies exist in the way that education providers react to and manage drug related incidents, meaning that potential safeguarding opportunities and pathways to support can be missed. In some cases, sanctions applied by education providers can be more severe than Police responses in the community. Furthermore, there is a concern that a lack of reporting could potentially put more young people at risk, either from becoming involved in drug use or being a victim of criminal exploitation.

The National Police Chief's Council has created guidance for schools and colleges about when to call the Police to an incident on school premises including for drug use or possession on your premises. The guidance and further information can be found at <https://www.avonandsomerset.police.uk/report/incidents-at-school-college/>.

'If a small quantity is found, a school or college can manage the incident in line with their drug policy'

This guidance should complement your current behavioural policies, and, if necessary, we would encourage you to make reasonable adjustments to those policies to best safeguard students and maintain their school place.

Schools and colleges have a key role at identifying pupils at risk of drug misuse. It is often the case that young people who are using or carrying drugs may have complex needs or feel unsafe. Our experience tells us that these incidents rarely happen in isolation and there is likely to be other issues that the young person is dealing with.

When a controlled drug incident has occurred, in any instance, please call your local Education Inclusion Manager or the Families in Focus office on the relevant number set out below. Within 48 hours a meeting should be arranged between the education provider, the locality Education Inclusion Manager, the young person and a parent or carer.

The Education Inclusion Manager will work with you to understand the nature of the incident and build a picture of the background and needs of the young person. They will review the incident with the appropriate staff and put forward several recommendations to support the young person's next steps. This might include access to targeted support from Bristol Drugs Project's New Leaf, mentoring or possible Safer Options support. Each incident will be managed on a case by case basis to facilitate the best possible outcome for the young person and maintain their school place.

If Avon and Somerset Constabulary are called, their approach is to divert, educate and safeguard young people wherever possible. The Youth Alcohol Drug Diversion (YADD) is available for young people caught in

possession of drugs for their personal use or if caught drunk and disorderly. This health intervention is delivered in partnership with the Youth Offending Service and Bristol Drug Project and if the young person engages with the support offered, no further action will be taken by Avon and Somerset Constabulary for the offence committed.

From September 2021 the BE project (www.beproject.co.uk) will be able to offer evidence-based drugs education and prevention packages in Bristol secondary schools and alternative education establishments as part project ADDER. This service is delivered from a harm reduction and health promotion perspective, and it is designed to be flexible and responsive to specific needs within school communities regarding education and can be used to enhance the PSHE / RSE curriculum. Please contact Joanna Mallinson jmallinson@gmail.com to arrange a telephone meeting to discuss how your school would like to use the service and to make bookings.

We hope that you will find this additional support helpful and we welcome any feedback, particularly in the early days of implementation. Further guidance will be coming out in September.

Kind Regards,

Ingrid, Calum and Ross

Education Inclusion Managers

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