

Alcohol and Drugs Awareness and Education Policy

Issue 4 November 2017



Spiritual



Physical



Educational



Service



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1 Purpose

The purpose of this policy document is to state the commitment of The Girls' Brigade Northern Ireland in relation to the following:

- 1 the provision of drugs awareness and training for its staff
- 2 the delivery of an appropriate and progressive Drugs Education Programme for its members
- 3 the implementation of the guidance provided by The Department of Education for Northern Ireland and
- 4 the fulfilment of all its obligations in relation to legislation regarding drugs.

In a desire to provide the best for girls at all times this policy is a statement of our aims and objectives in relation to the specific area of drug use.

2 Introduction

The Girls' Brigade exists for the welfare and development of girls as they mature to become young women in the context of their physical, mental, moral and spiritual wellbeing.

This desire is prevalent in all aspects of the organisation's operation and the subject of drugs is an appropriate issue to be addressed by the organisation.

The Girls' Brigade adopts a holistic approach with regards to the physical, mental, social, emotional, moral and spiritual wellbeing of its staff and members.

The Girls' Brigade condemns the use of drugs in society but it does not condemn the user.

The organisation accepts its responsibility in relation to the need to address the many social issues facing today's young people.

The Girls' Brigade recognises the prevalence of drug use and the demands this problem places on its members as they grow up in a drug-oriented society.

The organisation also realises that it is in a prime position to provide drugs awareness and education in a safe, secure and spiritual environment.

3 Definition of drugs

A drug is any chemical substance which changes the functions of the brain and/or body, altering how a person thinks, sees, feels and behaves.

It is understood that while all medicines are drugs not all drugs are medicines.

The definition of a drug, for the purposes of this policy, includes both legal and illegal substances which are currently available or may become available.

- The legal substances are as follows:
 - Alcohol
 - Tobacco
 - Prescribed medicines
 - 'Over-the-counter' medicines eg. Paracetamol
 - Volatile substances (also known as solvents) including glue, petrol, and aerosols
 - 'Poppers' and in their raw state

- The illegal substances are as follows:
 - Cannabis
 - Ecstasy
 - LSD
 - Amphetamine (Speed)
 - Heroin
 - Cocaine
 - 'Magic mushrooms'
 - Illegal highs

3 Signs and Symptoms of drug use

Recognising current drug use is a major issue for many professionals who work with young people. There is also the issue of identifying those young people who may be at increased risk of using drugs. Below are specific physical and behavioural signs that may be associated with drug use. Some of these, however, can indicate the onset of adolescence.

Physical Signs

These can differ depending on the type of drug taken, for example a stimulant or hallucinogen. Below are some of the physical signs related to drugs used illicitly in Northern Ireland.

Solvents

Solvents include glues, butane gas refills, aerosols, typewriting correcting fluids and thinners. Signs to look out for include:

- usual signs of intoxication - uncoordinated movement or slurred speech
- possible odour on clothes and breath
- redness around the mouth and nose, if using glue
- a cough
- possible stains on clothing, depending on type of solvent used.

Cannabis

Cannabis can have the effect of a depressant or mild hallucinogen, depending on the amount taken and situational factors. The effects of taking cannabis include:

- a tendency to laugh easily
- becoming talkative
- relaxed behaviour
- reddening of the eyes
- hunger

If the drug is smoked, it produces a distinctive sweet smell

3 Signs and Symptoms of drug use

What to look out for

If someone is having a bad time on drugs, they may be:

- anxious
- tense
- panicky
- overheated and dehydrated
- drowsy
- having difficulty with breathing.

What to do

The first things you should do are:

- stay calm
- calm them and be reassuring, don't scare them or chase after them
- try to find out what they've taken and stay with them.

If they are anxious, tense or panicky, you should:

- sit them in a quiet and calm room
- keep them away from crowds, bright lights and loud noises
- tell them to take slow deep breaths
- stay with them.

If they are really drowsy, you should:

- sit them in a quiet place and keep them awake
- if they become unconscious or don't respond, call an ambulance immediately and place them in the recovery position;

- don't scare them, shout at them or shock them
- don't give them coffee to wake them up
- don't put them in a cold shower to 'wake them up'.

If they are unconscious or having difficulty breathing, you should:

- immediately phone for an ambulance
- place them into the recovery position
- stay with them until the ambulance arrives
- if you know what drug they've taken, tell the ambulance crew; this can help make sure that they get the right treatment straight away.

4 Policy aims and objectives

The policy of The Girls' Brigade is to provide positive alternative experiences to drug use and to discourage any behaviour which is in any way anti-social or detrimental to society.

The Girls' Brigade seeks to demonstrate the benefits of a disciplined lifestyle in a Christian environment and context.

Drugs by their very nature cannot co-exist with such a lifestyle and are to be discouraged by example and education. The only exception to this is when drugs in the form of medicines are prescribed or recommended by a medical practitioner.

The Girls' Brigade endeavours to help members avoid the use of drugs. It also recognises the pressures on its members to experiment with drugs for recreational and other uses.

The Girls' Brigade has been and will continue to deliver effective drug education programmes with the dual purpose of providing primary prevention and early intervention messages.

5 Aims of our drug education programme

It is our hope and prayer that every member will be influenced by the drugs education they receive within The Girls' Brigade and as a result will be empowered to make the healthy and positive choice to avoid drugs except with medical supervision.

In order to achieve this it is our intention to:

- 1 provide appropriate messages in a protective environment
- 2 deliver drugs education which is preventative in style and progressive in nature through a scheme of badge-work
- 3 promote positive attitudes towards personal, physical and mental health
- 4 provide opportunities to explore the effects and consequences of drug use
- 5 explore their attitudes to drug use and drug users
- 6 help members to acquire the social skills needed to manage the pressures of the prevailing youth culture
- 7 improve the self-esteem, self-respect, self-discipline and confidence of members
- 8 help members acquire decision-making skills
- 9 experience positive peer influences
- 10 provide occasions to discuss their personal drug use in a secure situation
- 11 assist members to consider their right to refuse drugs
- 12 persuade those who have tried or who are using drugs to stop
- 13 make members aware of the legal consequences of drug use
- 14 encourage members to discover alternatives to drug use
- 15 promote a sense of responsibility towards other group members, the community and society in general
- 16 encourage members to be good examples of a drug-free lifestyle.

6 Contents of our drugs education

Informal and formal pastoral care will complement this programme of education. Drugs education within The Girls' Brigade has had its own unit within the badge-work structure for many years. Therefore, the continuing programme will be focussed within its own distinctive area of badge-work although it is relevant to, and may occur in, other aspects of badge-work such as Christian education.

The structure of the programme is progressive in nature as it is widely agreed that the best drugs education is consistent and continuous. The programme is divided into three units, each of which is delivered at an appropriate stage when members are in the Junior, Senior and Brigader sections.

Company Captains can choose to use materials which have been endorsed by Girls' Brigade Headquarters and/or make use of a specialist recommended by Headquarters.

Activity based interactive sessions make up the programme for each section with the option of using a standard or multiple-choice test at the conclusion to test the members' retention and understanding of the materials delivered.

The programme is delivered, or supervised, by the Officers in each individual company as they know every member personally and are familiar with their circumstances. On occasions it may be appropriate to deliver the drugs education programme by means of peer educators.

The programme may, at the initiative of the officer-in-charge, be complemented by the use of outside speakers/experts and audio-visuals.

Officers-in-charge are encouraged to seek the advice of Headquarters' staff or the Chaplain before inviting agencies or individuals to address the girls as their message may not be consistent with the programme or the ethos of The Girls' Brigade. An example of this would be where a visitor would suggest harm-reduction or harm-minimisation as alternatives to abstinence from drugs. Such messages are easily accepted but are potentially lethal.

7 Procedures for dealing with a drug related

There are three sets of circumstances to be considered in this section:

- 1 Finding a substance on the premises, in a vehicle or in an outdoor location;
- 2 Dealing with a member suspected of possession and/or attempting to supply a substance;
- 3 Coping with a member suspected of having taken a substance.

There are three important issues in relation to each of these drug- related incidents - **SEARCH, DETENTION, REASONABLE FORCE** and **CONFIDENTIALITY**.

SEARCH

An officer is not allowed to physically search a member unless that member is unconscious and it is absolutely essential to find out if more of the substance is present. This should only be carried out in the presence of another officer. If conscious the member can be asked to empty pockets and other possessions such as bags. The police and medical personnel have the authority to search a person.

DETENTION

If they do not object, a person may be detained while waiting for the police to arrive. Physical force cannot be used to detain them unless they are under the influence of a drug and are likely to cause harm to themselves and/or others. Locking them in a room is false imprisonment.

REASONABLE FORCE

Reasonable force is the minimum effort required for the minimum time necessary to restrain a person until such time as the police arrive or the danger to the person and/or others has diminished. It is only used as a **LAST RESORT** when a person under the influence of a substance poses a significant and real threat to their own safety or the safety of others.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Should a young person confide in an Officer that they have taken drugs that Officer could end up being in possession of information which would be unlawful to withhold from the police. This warning should be given to a person seeking help. It is important, however, that the person is reassured that help and counselling will be provided.

**Figure 1: Finding a substance on the premises,
in a vehicle or in an outdoor location**

The following procedure is recommended.

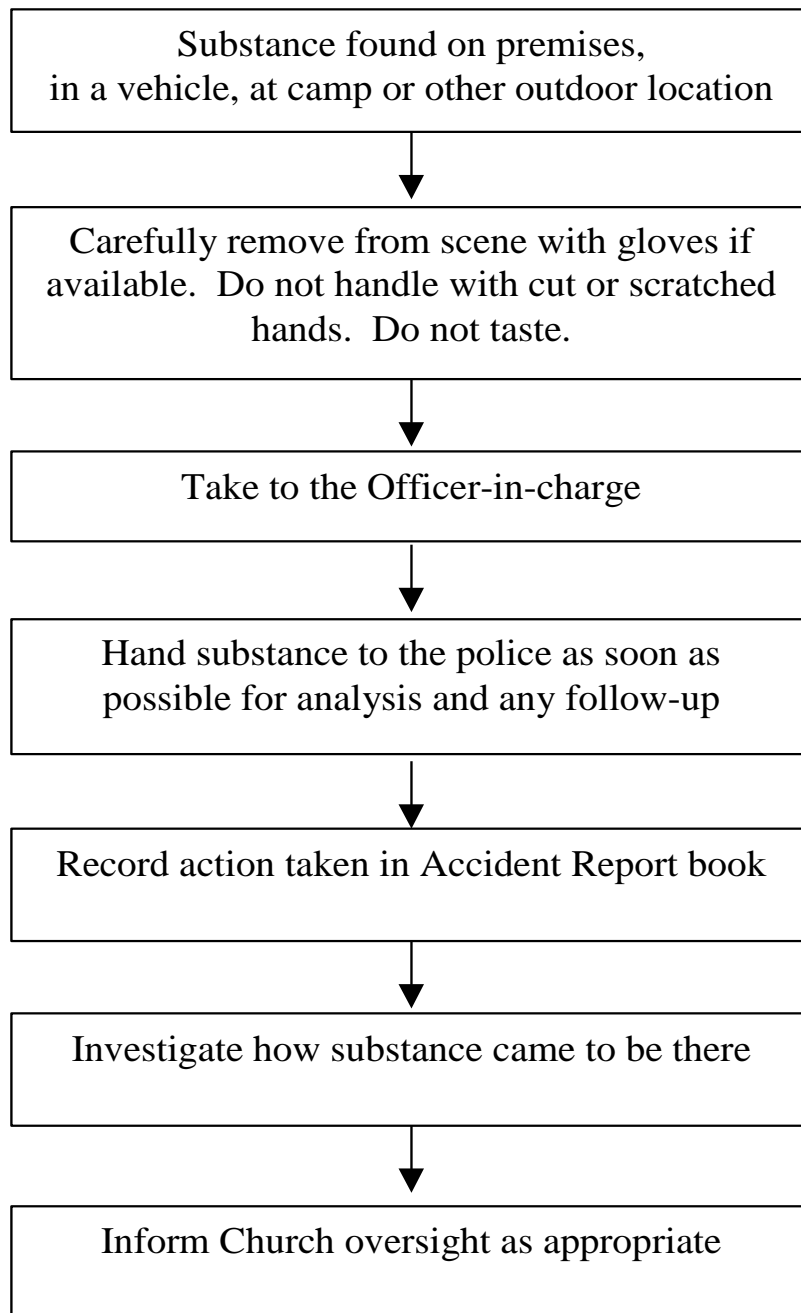


Figure 2: Dealing with a member suspected of possession and/or attempting to supply a substance.

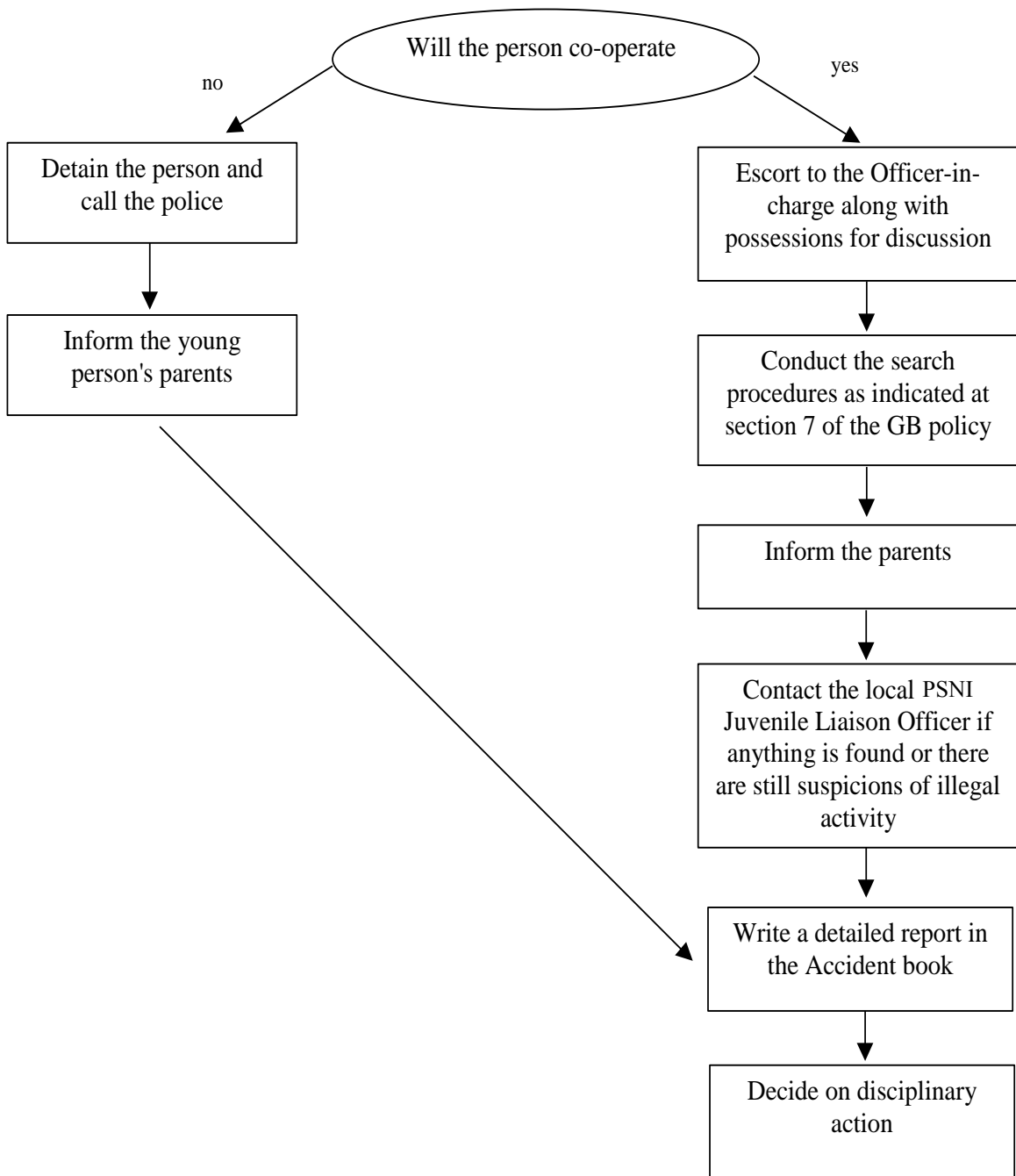
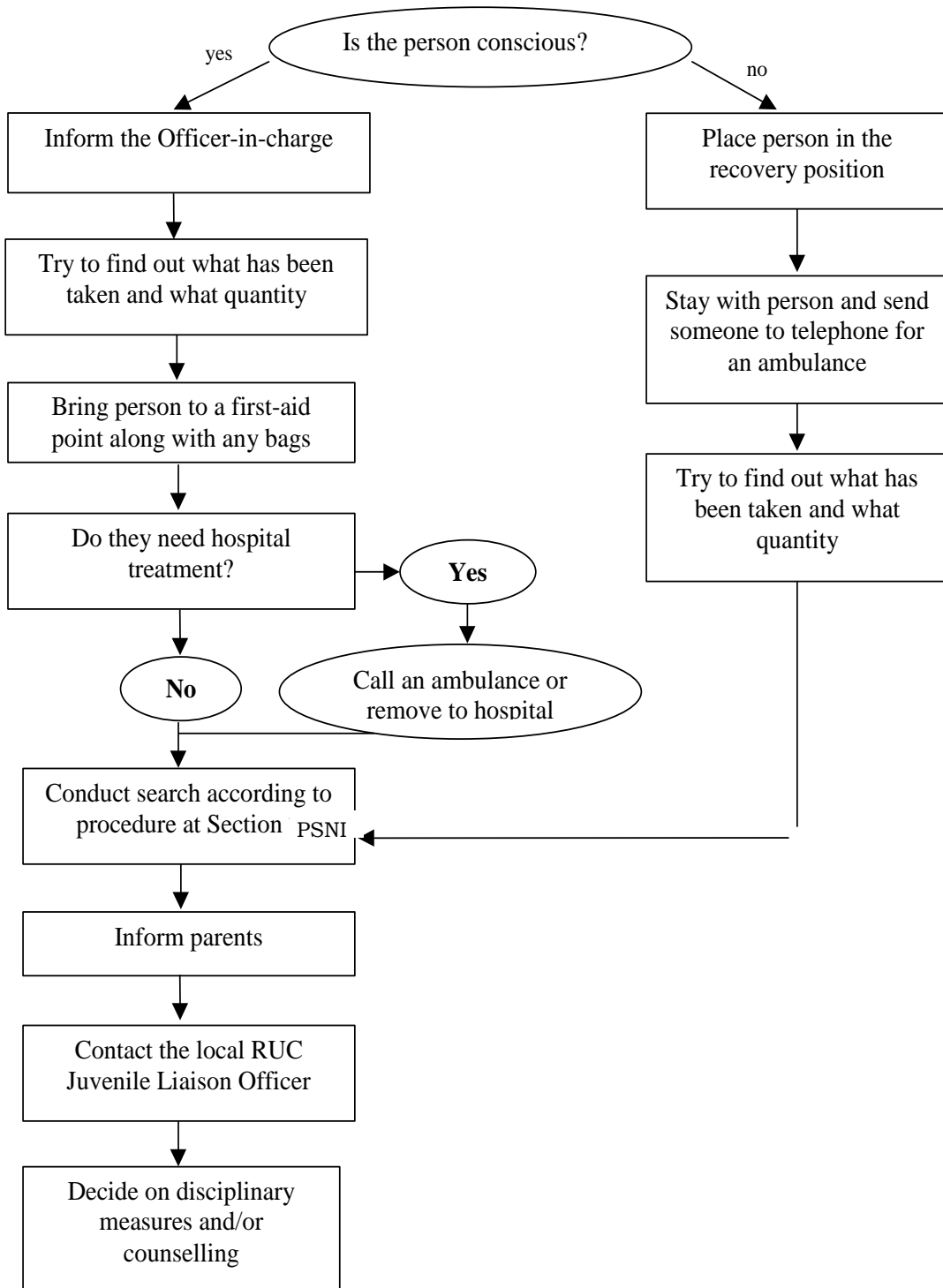


Figure 3: Coping with a member suspected of having taken a substance.



8 Disciplinary procedures

The Girls' Brigade would take any infringement of its rules very seriously.

The Captain/Officer-in-charge of a company has the authority to suspend or exclude any girl for any offence deemed serious enough to warrant that punishment.

The Captain/Officer-in-charge will always bear in mind the individual's circumstances but the premier concern is for the safety of all members.

Should it be necessary to send a girl home from an event or camp normal procedures regarding the travel arrangements for an individual will apply.

Parents will be informed at all stages of the procedure.

9 The management of volatile substances and prescribed medicines

Volatile substances

It is essential that all substances which could be abused are kept under lock and key at all times when not being used by cleaners.

Art materials

Officers should ensure that any drawing, writing and erasing materials such as markers which are provided by the company or brought by the girls are non-toxic.

Prescribed medicines

Bringing medicines should be discouraged but those requiring on-going treatment should have written permission from parents.

Girls requiring prescribed medicines during normal meetings must only bring the quantity needed for the duration of the meeting.

During camp the Camp Leader must liaise with parents regarding medication.

The Camp Leader should hold all medicines in a secure place.

A monitoring sheet should be filled in to avoid the risk of overdosing.

Over the counter (OTC) medicines eg. paracetamol

These should only be given following consultation with parents. A monitoring sheet should be completed and witnessed by another adult to avoid the risk of overdosing.

10 Staff awareness and training


To help the organisation achieve its objectives in relation to staff awareness about drugs, drug-related matters and the provision of the drugs education programme it will:

- 1 appoint a designated Headquarters' Officer to supervise the implementation of this policy and to receive feedback from Girls' Brigade companies
- 2 continue to provide opportunities for staff to improve their knowledge about drugs at training courses, District meetings and as other opportunities arise at the initiative of the Training Team
- 3 retain a specialist to advise on drugs and drugs education and to provide training for Officers.

11 Monitoring, review and evaluation

The Executive Committee of the Girls' Brigade in Northern Ireland will meet on a regular basis to:

- 1 discuss the drugs issue
- 2 review the organisation's policy
- 3 evaluate the effectiveness of the drugs education programme outlined in the policy
- 4 collate and discuss incidents reported by companies to Headquarters and review staff training.



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