St Mary's Summerstown Safe Church Policy

Smoking, Drugs and Alcohol – Policy for Children's and Youth Work

Approved by PCC on 25th January 2022. To be reviewed annually

Latest review: *24th February 2026*

The aim of this policy is to ensure that Youth Work at St Mary's is conducted in a positive and conducive atmosphere, where the welfare of children and young people is paramount at all times. This policy is in concordance with current UK law regarding alcohol and drugs.

General principles

- The Parochial Church Council (PCC) does not condone the use of illegal drugs or alcohol nor their illegal supply.
- The welfare of young people must be paramount at all times.
- Anyone whose behaviour is disruptive owing to alcohol or drugs will be challenged and may be asked to leave. Consideration should be given to contacting parents.
- Should a young person be identified as experiencing problematic drug or alcohol use, they should be offered support, guidance, and relevant referral if needed.
- The youth and children's workers will observe the current legal framework and act within it.
- Youth and children's workers will not take illegal substances, and will make sure that, whilst working with children or young people, they are not under the influence of alcohol or legal drugs which affect their ability to work effectively.
- Any incidents related to alcohol or drug use in children's and youth work at St Mary's must be recorded in the incident book and to the Parish Safeguarding Officers.

Youth Workers

Youth Workers must not interact with children or young people whilst smoking or under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs.

- Youth Workers who choose to smoke must do so out of sight of the children or young people in their care.
- Alcohol should not be consumed by Youth Workers or young people during youth activities at the church and when taking part in off site activities.
- Illegal drug use is strictly prohibited and must be reported to the Parish Safeguarding Officer who will decide whether or not to refer the matter to the police.

Young People and Smoking

- There is no minimum age limit for smoking, although those under 18 are not permitted to buy tobacco products.
- Smoking is illegal in any enclosed public premises.
- Young people wishing to smoke must advise their Youth Workers, and be directed to a designated smoking area a safe distance away from the main group

- On residential trips, it is appropriate to include a question on smoking on the parental consent form to establish parental knowledge of the young person's smoking.

Young People and Alcohol

- It is against the law for anyone under the age of 18 to buy alcohol in a pub, off licence, supermarket or other outlet, or for anyone to buy alcohol for someone under 18 to consume in a pub or a public place.
- St Mary's church does not allow the service of alcohol to people under 18 and if there is any doubt, an ID should be asked for.
- At youth groups and activity events held both on and off-site, neither the young people nor the Youth Workers are permitted to consume alcohol for the duration of the event.

Any young person arriving for a youth group or other event who appears to be under the influence of alcohol must be referred to the Youth Leader / Parish Safeguarding Officer. An incident book will be maintained by the Parish Safeguarding Officer who will decide whether or not to allow the young person to take part in the event and whether to raise the issue with parents / carers.

Young People and Prescription Drugs

Any necessary medication, whether prescribed or off the shelf from a pharmacy should be noted on the parental consent form.

Any child or young person must hand their medication to one of the overall leaders or a trained first aider at the start of any youth group or activity event. Prescription drugs should be dispensed by one of the overall leaders and/or a trainer first aider.

Anyone finding prescription medication in a communal area must remove the drugs immediately to limit the risk to others. Drugs must be handed to the Youth Leader or Parish Safeguarding Officer who will either return the medication to the owner, dispose of it, or hand into a pharmacist.

Young People and Illegal Drugs

Use of illegal drugs on site at St Mary's or on organised trips is never permitted.

Any young person arriving for a youth group or other event who is suspected to be carrying or to be under the influence of illegal drugs must be referred to the Youth Leader / Parish Safeguarding Officer. An incident book will be maintained by the Parish Safeguarding Officer who will decide whether or not to allow the young person to take part in the event and whether to raise the issue with parents / carers and the police.

If a young person is suspected of carrying drugs, they may be asked to turn out their pockets, but personal searches are not appropriate.

Small quantities of drugs can be flushed away. The incident must first be logged and should be carried out in the presence of another worker.

Disposal should be carried out as soon as practicable, otherwise the worker could

themselves be open to charges of possession.

Workers must take extreme care if disposing of needles. If no sharp bins are available they should be carefully placed in a safe place (eg coke can) until proper disposal can be arranged.

Where the quantity of drugs found is large (indicating supply) the police should be notified.

Confidentiality

- The PCC aims to protect the young person's right to privacy
- However, unconditional confidentiality cannot be guaranteed where the young person's actions or behaviour represent a serious risk to the safety or well-being of other members, workers or the community at large.

Contact with parents

- In cases of immediate risk to the health of the child or young person, the parents will be contacted and also emergency medical services if required.
- If the worker believes parental contact would exacerbate the situation (for example, the family home may be an important factor in the young person's drug use) he/she must discuss the situation with the PSO prior to any contact being made.