

## Drug Testing, Sniffer Dogs and Young People

# Foreword

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This briefing paper has been produced to provide guidance to agencies as well as to outline the Norfolk Drug and Alcohol Action Team partnership position on the use of sniffer dogs and drug testing within education establishments and other young people settings.

Headteachers of schools and managers of young people's services are urged to respond in a supportive way to this document, gaining further advice and guidance on these matters if required (contact details are contained within the document).

We would like to thank the DAAT Young People's Implementation Group for the production of this document.



Andy Hayman, Chief Constable  
Norfolk Constabulary



Dr Bryan Slater  
Director of Education  
Norfolk LEA

## Background

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In providing this guidance the Norfolk DAAT and its partner agencies have recognised the increased awareness regarding the issue of drug testing on young people. This has gained prominence with the recent comments by the Prime Minister and the launch of the DfES Guidance in March 2004 'Drugs: Guidance For Schools' (ref: DfES/0092/2004).

This document acknowledged that some schools have: -

“adopted further strategies, such as urine-testing or requesting police handlers/private companies with sniffer dogs to enter the school, in order to detect illegal drug possession or use. Head teachers are likely to use such strategies and are best placed to make decisions on whether such approaches are appropriate. It is important that teachers have at their disposal a full range of actions to deal with drugs in their schools.

In deciding whether to use these approaches, schools will want to consult with local partners, including the police. It is essential that before a school takes the decision to use one of these strategies it should be considered very carefully.”

The document also goes on to consider the use of sniffer dogs within schools for the purposes of demonstrations and educational visits, it states:-

“If sniffer dogs are to be used for demonstration or educational purposes schools will need to have procedures in place, and have agreed in advance with the police, what will happen should the sniffer dog indicate a trace on a pupil, member of staff or visitor to the school.”

However, a briefing paper to the Regional Government Office Drugs Teams advised that there was an expectation that such measures would:-

“happen largely in secondary schools where there was evidence of a serious drug problem.”

This guidance has been produced as a consequence of questions raised locally by the publicity of the document. It recognises that, although this will mainly apply to those working within the Local Education Authority (LEA), it is important that all people who work with young people across the county are aware of this guidance and the identified issues.

The DfES Guidance (Annex 10, pages 120 and 121) recognises the fact that head teachers have the right to resort to such measures. It is the position of the Norfolk DAAT that these should not be undertaken without extreme caution and as such head teachers should consider carefully whether: -

1. such action is consistent with the pastoral responsibility of the school to create a supportive environment
2. such action will lead to labelling and be damaging to pupils concerned
3. the intention to use such an approach is clearly stated in the schools Drug Policy, it is developed in consultation with pupils, parents, staff, governors and the whole school community
4. parents/carers give their prior informed consent (usually in writing) for such actions to be used
5. such action considers in detail what will happen if drugs are found or detected on any member of the school community (including staff and visitors)
6. such action would be sensitive to and respect the right to privacy, including legal and human rights of pupils who may be identified
7. such action is consistent with any plans that are in place to deal with potential media interest.

## The Norfolk Drug & Alcohol Action Team's perspective and advice: —————

- Head teachers and managers of young people's services should consider that the DfES document provides for a range of responses to address young people's drug use, but does not indicate that the use of drug testing and sniffer dogs is beneficial or indeed best practice.
- It is the view of Norfolk DAAT that alternative strategies should be considered which fall short of such extreme action. Member agencies of Norfolk DAAT offer a range of services that seek to address and support both schools and young people in respect of substance use.
- Evaluative research into the use of sniffer dogs as part of a project within Bedfordshire schools found that walking pupils past the dogs (for the purposes of detection) carried high costs and risks but had no added value to educational events.
- Norfolk Chief Constable Andy Hayman has stated that police dog handlers will not be used for this purpose and that their role is to respond to specific incidents and situations.
- The use of police dog handlers for this purpose is not part of the approach outlined by ACPO (Association of Chief Police Officers) in either their Drug Policy or their Police Dog Training and Care Manual Policy.

It is deemed appropriate to quote directly from a published article in Drug Link (May/June 2004); Emma Balchin (Schools Drug Advisor, Wolverhampton) told the magazine

*"I haven't met a school drug advisor in England who supports the use of dogs...It's just a way of schools saying that they have a hard line on drug abuse to parents whilst driving pupils' problems or concerns further underground...the only thing the dogs found in our school was some wrapped, crushed up chalk which a child had thrown on the floor for a joke. The only thing found on a pupil after a dog had sat next to her causing her great humiliation, was a packet of contraceptive pills."*

The decision to include drug testing of young people or the use of sniffer dogs (as outlined in this paper) within a school or young people's setting is, therefore, not supported by the Norfolk Drug & Alcohol Action Team partnership.

## References

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- 1 DfES, Drugs: Guidance for Schools. DfES/0092/2004
- 2 Bedfordshire Police (2004), Evaluation of Drugs Dogs Events in Bedfordshire's Schools. Matrix mha research and consultancy
- 3 Max Daly (2004). Class of 2004: Going to the Dogs. Drug Link volume 19, issue 3 May/June 2004

## Contacts

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*The word drug within this document refers to all drugs including medicines, volatile substances, alcohol and illegal drugs.*

# Notes

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This logo represents  
all the partner  
agencies of the DAAT:

## **Tackling drugs**



*Education, Social Services, Police, Health, Prison Service, Probation Service Youth Offending Teams, Connexions, Local Authorities and Norfolk Drug & Alcohol Treatment Providers.*

**If you would like to obtain additional copies of this briefing paper or to have them supplied in large print, audio, Braille, alternative format or in a different language please contact Lesley Barlow at:  
The Health Information Team, Eastern Support Services Tel: 01603 307416 or download a copy from the Norfolk DAAT website: [www.nordat.org.uk](http://www.nordat.org.uk)**



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