



**FOREST ROW PARISH COUNCIL
YOUTH SERVICE DELIVERY POLICY:
Appendix: YOUTH SERVICE LEGAL ISSUES**

The following issues which may arise in the course of youth work have legal implications:

1. Smoking

It is illegal to sell cigarettes to people under 18, yet there is a high rate of smoking amongst young people. In the past youth workers have shown a great deal of tolerance towards this. All youth clubs have a non-smoking policy inside buildings.

2. Alcohol

It is illegal to sell alcohol to people under 18, yet the consumption rate for this age group is high. Many supermarket and off-licence chains display Challenge 21 notices stating that they will not serve persons who look under 21 without ID. Neither adults nor young people are allowed to drink on work premises during work hours. The health risks tend to be publicised and alcohol abuse is an issue often covered within the curriculum. It is best to ask young people to dispose of the alcohol themselves and to watch them do this rather than confiscate it.

3. Volatile Substance Abuse

It is illegal to sell solvent-based glue and other solvents to under 18s. But young people manage to get hold of it. Even more worrying is the inhalation of fumes from everyday substances such as aerosol sprays which can cause death. Volatile substance use is more likely to happen out of sight of youth workers, who are more likely to have to deal with young people who are still under the influence.

4. Use of Hard and Soft Drugs

Definitely illegal but many young people do take drugs. Drugs education has shifted over the years. The shock treatment - showing how drugs can kill or ruin lives - has had little effect. So too has the say 'no' approach which tried to persuade young people to fight the peer pressure to experiment. These days the focus is on helping young people to consider the issues so that hopefully, they can make informed choices. Peer education projects, in which young people work with their peers to increase understanding about drugs, has had some success. There is a common duty that everyone shares to reduce crime.

5. Theft/Violence

Obviously illegal, but stealing the coffee bar money may be dealt with by the youth work team rather than reporting it to the police:

- A young person can be convicted of a criminal offence at the age of ten
- The police can come into your session, without a search warrant, if they are in 'hot pursuit' of a suspect

- It is an offence to carry knives or any other weapons (any instrument that is altered from its original use may be deemed as an offensive weapon)
- If someone brings a weapon onto the premises they should be asked to leave, unless you feel they will be a danger, in which case the police should be called.

6. Racial Abuse

Racism exists despite legislation – one can legislate to curb peoples' behaviour, but changing attitudes is a different thing. Discrimination of any kind should not be tolerated. How one deals with this should be an agreed team approach. But one should try to:

- Leave the perpetrators knowing that they are in the wrong and how they could change
- Offer support to young people who may have been on the receiving end
- Report any incidents to the Line Manager
- If it is a racial incident, complete the correct paperwork

7. Sex and Sexual Abuse

It is illegal to inflict on young people up to 18 years, any form of abuse that may cause physical, mental or emotional harm

- The age of consent for girls is 16 years
- Homosexual acts between consenting adults (in private) is legal from 16 years
- Boys under 14 years can be charged with rape

One should refer to the Child Protection and Sexual Health Education Policy for guidance on this whole area

Policy due for review May 2022
