

Remedicare Education Services

Substance Misuse, Smoking, Vaping, Drugs and Alcohol Policy

Applies to: All Remedicare Education Services provision

Approved: September 2026

Review Date: September 2027

1. Introduction

Remedicare Education Services is committed to providing a safe, healthy and supportive environment in which children and young people can learn, develop independence and prepare for adulthood.

Remedicare recognises that children and young people may encounter alcohol, tobacco, nicotine products, vaping, illegal drugs, prescription medication misuse and other substances in their homes, communities, peer groups and online environments.

As an Alternative Provision provider, Remedicare has an important role in helping learners understand the risks associated with substance use while ensuring that safeguarding concerns are identified and responded to appropriately.

This policy sets out Remedicare's approach to:

- preventing substance misuse;
- educating learners about drugs, alcohol, smoking and vaping;
- maintaining safe and substance-free environments;
- managing incidents involving substances;
- supporting learners who may be affected by substance misuse;
- responding to safeguarding concerns;
- managing prescribed medication safely;
- working with parents/carers, schools, local authorities and other professionals; and
- maintaining appropriate professional boundaries.

The policy applies to:

- Remedicare centres;
- outdoor and forest provision;
- outreach provision;
- community-based learning;
- educational visits;
- transport provided or arranged by Remedicare;
- work-related learning where Remedicare has responsibility for the learner;

- Remedicare activities and events; and
- other locations where staff are acting on behalf of Remedicare.

2. Legislative and Guidance Framework

This policy has been developed with regard to relevant legislation and guidance, including:

- Misuse of Drugs Act 1971;
- Psychoactive Substances Act 2016;
- Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974;
- Health and Safety (First-Aid) Regulations 1981;
- Children Act 1989 and 2004;
- Education Act 2002, where applicable;
- Equality Act 2010;
- Children and Families Act 2014;
- SEND Code of Practice: 0 to 25 years;
- Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026, where applicable and as a safeguarding benchmark;
- Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026;
- Department for Education guidance relating to drugs, alcohol, smoking, vaping and personal, social, health and economic education;
- DfE Non-School Alternative Provision Voluntary National Standards;
- relevant local safeguarding arrangements; and
- Remedicare's commissioning and contractual requirements.

KCSIE 2026 reinforces that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and that staff must act immediately where there are concerns about a child.

The DfE Non-School Alternative Provision Voluntary National Standards provide a specific framework for non-school AP and include safeguarding, health and safety, support and quality of education. Remedicare will use these standards to support its ongoing quality assurance and commissioning arrangements.

3. Scope

This policy applies to:

- all Remedicare employees;

- agency workers;
- volunteers;
- contractors;
- visitors;
- children and young people attending Remedicare;
- parents/carers while on Remedicare premises;
- professionals visiting Remedicare; and
- anyone acting on behalf of Remedicare.

The policy applies during:

- normal provision hours;
- transport journeys;
- educational visits;
- community activities;
- outreach sessions;
- work placements where Remedicare has responsibility for the learner;
- staff training and events; and
- other Remedicare-sanctioned activities.

4. Definitions

For the purposes of this policy, substances may include:

Illegal drugs

Controlled drugs or other substances whose possession, supply or use is unlawful, subject to applicable legal exceptions.

Alcohol

Alcoholic drinks and other products containing alcohol intended for consumption.

Tobacco

This includes:

- cigarettes;
- cigars;

- hand-rolling tobacco;
- chewing tobacco;
- snuff; and
- other tobacco products.

Nicotine and vaping products

This includes:

- disposable vapes;
- refillable vaping devices;
- e-cigarettes;
- vape liquids;
- nicotine pouches; and
- other nicotine-containing products.

Psychoactive substances

Substances capable of producing a psychoactive effect, including substances sometimes described as "legal highs".

Volatile substances

Substances that can produce intoxicating effects when fumes or vapours are inhaled.

Misuse

The use, possession, supply or administration of a substance in a way that is unlawful, unsafe, inappropriate or contrary to medical or professional advice.

5. Remedicare's Position

Remedicare operates a **smoke-free, vape-free and substance-free environment**.

The use of illegal drugs, alcohol, tobacco, vaping products or other prohibited substances is not permitted during Remedicare provision or activities.

This applies to:

- Remedicare buildings;

- outdoor areas;
- car parks and access areas;
- Remedicare vehicles;
- transport provided or arranged by Remedicare;
- educational visits;
- outreach sessions;
- community activities; and
- other activities undertaken on behalf of Remedicare.

Staff must never attend work under the influence of alcohol or drugs where their ability to safely carry out their role may be affected.

6. Prohibited Behaviour

The following are prohibited during Remedicare activities, subject to lawful and appropriate management of prescribed medication:

- using illegal drugs;
- possessing illegal drugs;
- supplying or distributing illegal drugs;
- selling illegal drugs;
- consuming alcohol;
- supplying alcohol to children or young people;
- smoking tobacco;
- vaping or using e-cigarettes;
- using nicotine products where prohibited by the setting or activity;
- possessing substances intended for misuse;
- being under the influence of substances where this creates a safety or safeguarding risk;
- encouraging or pressuring another person to use substances;
- bringing substances onto Remedicare premises for the purpose of misuse;
- using prescribed medication other than as prescribed;
- sharing prescribed medication;
- deliberately misusing over-the-counter medication; or
- bringing drug-related paraphernalia onto Remedicare premises for inappropriate use.

Where possession of an item is not itself unlawful, Remedicare may still prohibit its use on the basis of health, safety, safeguarding or operational requirements.

7. Smoking and Vaping

Remedicare premises and activities are smoke-free and vape-free.

Smoking or vaping is not permitted:

- inside Remedicare buildings;
- in outdoor areas belonging to Remedicare;
- in Remedicare vehicles;
- during transport;
- during educational visits;
- during outreach;
- during community activities undertaken as part of provision; or
- in the presence of learners while staff are acting in their professional capacity.

Staff must not smoke or vape while supervising learners.

Staff must not leave learners unsupervised in order to smoke or vape.

Where staff smoke or vape outside of work, they must ensure that this does not create a safeguarding, health or professional-boundary concern.

Staff must not smoke or vape immediately outside entrances where this may expose children, young people, families or visitors to smoke or vapour.

8. Vapes and Nicotine Products

Remedicare recognises that lawful possession and use are different issues.

A learner possessing a lawful vaping device does not automatically mean that a safeguarding or criminal concern exists.

However, vaping is prohibited during Remedicare provision.

Where a learner is found using or possessing a vape, staff will consider:

- the learner's age;
- whether the product is lawful;

- whether it contains nicotine or another substance;
- whether the learner may have been supplied the product by an adult;
- whether there is evidence of exploitation;
- whether the product may contain an illegal substance;
- whether there are other safeguarding concerns; and
- the appropriate proportionate response.

Where there is a concern that a child has been supplied with vaping products by an adult or another person, this should be considered as a potential safeguarding concern.

9. Drugs and Controlled Substances

Illegal drugs must not be brought onto Remedicare premises or into Remedicare activities.

If staff discover a suspected illegal substance, they must:

1. prioritise immediate safety;
2. prevent children from accessing the substance;
3. avoid unnecessary handling;
4. inform the DSL/manager immediately;
5. record the concern;
6. consider whether police involvement is required;
7. preserve relevant evidence where safe and appropriate; and
8. follow Remedicare safeguarding procedures.

Staff must not attempt to investigate suspected drug offences themselves.

Staff should not put themselves at risk by attempting to seize substances from a learner.

Where police involvement is required, Remedicare will cooperate appropriately.

10. Alcohol

Alcohol must not be consumed during Remedicare provision or activities.

Staff must not attend work under the influence of alcohol.

Learners must not consume alcohol during Remedicare activities.

Where a learner appears to be under the influence of alcohol, staff should:

- prioritise the learner's immediate safety;
- assess whether medical assistance is required;
- inform the appropriate manager/DSL;
- contact parents/carers where appropriate;
- consider whether safeguarding concerns are present;
- record the incident; and
- seek emergency assistance where required.

Where there is a concern about a learner's exposure to alcohol within the home or community, this should be considered as a potential safeguarding concern rather than simply a behaviour issue.

11. Prescription and Other Medication

Prescribed medication is not considered an illegal drug.

Medication must be managed in accordance with Remedicare's **First Aid and Administration of Medicines Policy** and the learner's relevant Individual Healthcare Plan (IHP), where applicable.

Medication should:

- be appropriately labelled;
- remain in its original packaging where required;
- be stored securely;
- only be administered by appropriately trained and authorised staff;
- be administered in accordance with written instructions;
- be recorded appropriately; and
- be returned or disposed of safely in accordance with the medication arrangements.

Staff must not:

- share medication between learners;
- administer medication without appropriate authority and instructions;
- alter a prescribed dose;
- give medication to another learner;
- encourage a learner to take another person's medication; or
- retain medication unnecessarily.

Where a learner is assessed as competent to self-administer medication, this must be managed through an appropriate risk assessment and healthcare arrangements.

12. Medication Errors and Concerns

Any medication error must be reported immediately.

Examples include:

- wrong medication;
- wrong dose;
- missed dose;
- medication given to the wrong learner;
- medication given at the wrong time;
- medication that has expired;
- missing medication;
- medication being refused;
- medication being lost; or
- unauthorised access to medication.

The response must prioritise the learner's health and safety.

Appropriate medical advice should be sought where required.

The incident must be recorded in accordance with Remedicare's medication procedures.

Where the incident raises a safeguarding concern, it must also be referred to the DSL.

13. Education and Prevention

Education is a key part of Remedicare's approach to preventing substance misuse.

Drug, alcohol, smoking and vaping education may be delivered through:

- RSHE;
- personal development;
- preparation for adulthood;
- health and wellbeing activities;

- community learning;
- individualised learning;
- practical activities;
- one-to-one support; and
- safeguarding education.

Education will aim to help learners:

- understand the risks associated with substance use;
- recognise unsafe situations;
- understand peer pressure;
- develop decision-making skills;
- understand the impact of substances on physical health;
- understand the impact on emotional wellbeing;
- recognise dependence and misuse;
- understand the law;
- recognise exploitation;
- understand how to seek help;
- know how to access appropriate support; and
- develop strategies for staying safe.

14. Individualised Substance Misuse Education

Remedicare recognises that some learners may already have experience of:

- alcohol;
- smoking;
- vaping;
- drugs;
- substance misuse;
- family substance misuse;
- exploitation;
- criminal activity; or
- substance-related harm.

Staff must not make assumptions about a learner's experience.

Teaching should be adapted to the learner's:

- age;
- developmental level;
- communication needs;
- SEND;
- cognitive ability;
- emotional development;
- previous experience;
- safeguarding needs; and
- EHCP outcomes.

For learners with significant communication needs, education may focus on:

- identifying unsafe situations;
- recognising substances that should not be consumed;
- communicating "no";
- communicating "help";
- identifying trusted adults;
- understanding safe and unsafe choices;
- understanding medicine versus harmful substances; and
- developing functional safety skills.

15. Safeguarding and Substance Misuse

Substance misuse can be associated with wider safeguarding risks.

Staff must remain alert to possible indicators of:

- neglect;
- exploitation;
- criminal exploitation;
- county lines;
- peer-on-peer exploitation;
- sexual exploitation;
- grooming;
- domestic abuse;
- parental substance misuse;
- homelessness;
- self-neglect;

- mental health difficulties;
- coercion;
- trafficking;
- serious violence; and
- other forms of abuse.

Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026 strengthens expectations around recognising hidden harms, coercive control and abusive behaviour in intimate relationships.

A substance-related concern should therefore not automatically be treated as a behaviour matter.

Staff should ask:

"What might this tell us about the child's safety and circumstances?"

rather than simply:

"What sanction should the child receive?"

16. Signs of Possible Substance Misuse

Staff should remain aware of possible changes such as:

- unexplained changes in behaviour;
- changes in attendance;
- changes in peer relationships;
- secrecy;
- unexplained money or possessions;
- unusual tiredness;
- changes in emotional presentation;
- withdrawal;
- increased risk-taking;
- unexplained injuries;
- changes in personal presentation;
- unusual smells;
- possession of unknown substances;
- drug-related paraphernalia;
- online activity relating to substances; or
- information from another child or adult.

No individual sign should be treated as proof of substance misuse.

Concerns should be considered within the wider safeguarding context.

17. Responding to a Learner Who Appears Under the Influence

If a learner appears to be under the influence of alcohol or another substance, staff should:

1. remain calm;
2. maintain appropriate supervision;
3. move the learner to a safe environment where appropriate;
4. assess immediate health and safety;
5. inform the DSL and/or appropriate manager;
6. seek medical assistance if required;
7. contact emergency services if there is an immediate medical emergency;
8. contact the parent/carer where appropriate;
9. consider whether safeguarding referral is required;
10. record the incident factually; and
11. consider appropriate follow-up support.

Staff should not attempt to diagnose intoxication.

Where there is uncertainty about a learner's health, staff should seek appropriate medical advice.

18. Medical Emergencies

If a learner has:

- collapsed;
- lost consciousness;
- difficulty breathing;
- a seizure;
- severe vomiting;
- severe confusion;
- signs of poisoning;
- suspected overdose;
- significant injury; or

- another serious medical presentation,

staff must follow emergency procedures and seek medical assistance.

Where appropriate, staff should call **999**.

Staff should not delay emergency medical assistance while attempting to establish what substance has been taken.

If information about a substance is available, this should be passed to emergency professionals.

19. Disclosures

If a learner tells a member of staff that they:

- use drugs;
- drink alcohol;
- vape or smoke;
- have been supplied substances;
- have been pressured to use substances;
- have been exploited;
- have witnessed drug-related activity;
- have drugs in their home;
- are worried about someone else's substance use; or
- are at risk because of substance misuse,

staff must listen calmly and take the concern seriously.

Staff must:

- avoid judgement;
- avoid interrogating the learner;
- avoid promising confidentiality;
- avoid attempting to investigate;
- explain that information may need to be shared to keep them safe;
- record the information accurately; and
- report the concern to the DSL without delay where safeguarding may be involved.

KCSIE 2026 reinforces that staff should act immediately on safeguarding concerns and report them to the DSL or deputy without delay.

20. Confidentiality

Remedicare will treat information about substance use sensitively.

However, confidentiality cannot be guaranteed where there is:

- a safeguarding concern;
- a risk of harm;
- an immediate medical concern;
- a legal requirement to share information;
- a requirement to protect another person; or
- another lawful and proportionate reason to share information.

Staff must never promise a learner:

"I won't tell anyone."

Instead, staff should explain that they may need to share information with people who can help keep them safe.

21. Recording and Information Sharing

Substance-related incidents and safeguarding concerns must be recorded factually.

Records should include:

- what was observed;
- what was reported;
- when and where it happened;
- who was involved;
- actions taken;
- advice received;
- decisions made;
- safeguarding considerations; and
- outcomes/follow-up.

Where appropriate, safeguarding concerns should be recorded through CPOMS.

Information should be shared on a need-to-know basis and in accordance with Remedicare's Privacy and Data Protection Policy.

Data protection must not prevent necessary safeguarding information sharing.

22. Parents and Carers

Where appropriate, Remedicare will work with parents/carers to support learners affected by substance misuse.

Depending on the circumstances, this may include:

- sharing concerns;
- discussing safety;
- agreeing support strategies;
- signposting to specialist services;
- reviewing risk assessments;
- liaising with the commissioning school;
- involving the local authority; or
- referring to specialist services.

Parents/carers will not automatically be informed before safeguarding information is shared where doing so could increase risk to the child or interfere with a safeguarding response.

23. Working With Other Agencies

Remedicare may work with:

- schools;
- local authorities;
- children's social care;
- police;
- health professionals;
- substance misuse services;
- youth services;
- mental health services;
- safeguarding partners;

- commissioners; and
- other appropriate professionals.

Information will be shared lawfully, proportionately and where necessary to support the learner's safety and wellbeing.

24. Staff Conduct

Staff must maintain professional boundaries when discussing substance use.

Staff must not:

- share personal drug or alcohol experiences with learners unnecessarily;
- normalise illegal drug use;
- encourage substance use;
- purchase substances for learners;
- supply alcohol, tobacco, vaping products or drugs to learners;
- allow learners to access staff medication;
- consume alcohol during Remedicare activities;
- attend work impaired by alcohol or drugs; or
- use Remedicare vehicles while impaired.

Staff must follow the Remedicare Staff Code of Conduct.

Any concern about staff substance misuse that affects their ability to safely work with children must be managed through appropriate HR, safeguarding and health and safety procedures.

25. Staff Smoking and Vaping

Remedicare is a smoke-free and vape-free workplace.

Staff must not smoke or vape:

- inside Remedicare premises;
- on Remedicare grounds;
- in Remedicare vehicles;
- while transporting learners;

- while supervising learners;
- during educational visits;
- during outreach;
- during community activities; or
- in any situation where they are acting in a professional capacity around learners.

Staff should also consider professional boundaries and the potential impact of visible smoking or vaping on learners.

26. Visitors and Contractors

Visitors and contractors must comply with Remedicare's smoke-free and substance-free requirements.

Where a visitor appears to be under the influence of alcohol or drugs and presents a safety or safeguarding concern, Remedicare may:

- refuse entry;
- ask the individual to leave;
- contact an appropriate manager;
- contact emergency services or police where necessary; or
- take other proportionate action.

27. Searches and Seizure

Remedicare does not routinely conduct invasive searches of children.

Where there is a concern that a learner has an item or substance that may place themselves or others at risk, staff must follow Remedicare's behaviour, safeguarding and risk-management procedures.

Staff must not physically search a learner unless there is a clear lawful and organisational basis for doing so and the staff member is appropriately authorised and trained.

Where an illegal substance is suspected, staff should avoid unnecessary handling and seek advice from the DSL/manager and, where appropriate, the police.

28. Hazardous and Volatile Substances

Remedicare will store potentially hazardous substances securely.

This includes, where applicable:

- cleaning products;
- solvents;
- aerosols;
- glues;
- correction fluids;
- chemicals;
- fuels;
- laboratory materials; and
- other substances capable of causing harm.

Staff must follow relevant COSHH, health and safety and risk assessment arrangements.

Children must not have unsupervised access to hazardous substances.

29. Support for Learners

Remedicare's approach is not solely punitive.

Where a learner is experiencing substance-related difficulties, Remedicare will consider appropriate support.

Support may include:

- trusted-adult support;
- individual education;
- RSHE/personal development work;
- wellbeing support;
- family engagement;
- referral to specialist services;
- health professional involvement;
- safeguarding intervention;
- risk assessment;
- support from the commissioning school;

- local authority support; and
- preparation-for-adulthood support.

The response will be proportionate to the circumstances.

30. Enforcement and Consequences

A breach of this policy will be managed proportionately and in accordance with Remedicare's policies and procedures.

For learners, possible responses may include:

- discussion and education;
- increased supervision;
- individual safety planning;
- parent/carer involvement;
- review of risk assessment;
- safeguarding referral;
- referral to specialist support;
- liaison with the commissioning school;
- local authority involvement;
- police involvement where appropriate; and
- other proportionate consequences in accordance with Remedicare's behaviour and placement arrangements.

Remedicare does not use "expulsion" as a default response because Remedicare is an Alternative Provision provider and placement decisions may involve the commissioning school, local authority and contractual arrangements.

Any restriction, suspension or ending of a placement will be managed in accordance with the relevant placement and commissioning arrangements.

For staff, breaches may be managed under:

- Staff Code of Conduct;
- Staff Concerns & Conduct Protocol;
- Disciplinary Procedure;
- safeguarding procedures; and/or
- other relevant Remedicare procedures.

For visitors and contractors, Remedicare may refuse entry or require the person to leave.

31. Reporting Concerns

Any concern relating to drugs, alcohol, smoking, vaping or substance misuse should be reported promptly.

Depending on the concern, staff should report to:

- the DSL;
- DDSL;
- Centre Manager;
- Service Director; or
- emergency services where immediate danger exists.

Staff must not wait for an incident to become serious before reporting a safeguarding concern.

If staff are concerned about safeguarding practice and feel unable to raise the matter internally, they should follow Remedicare's Whistleblowing Policy.

32. Education and Curriculum Links

This policy should be implemented alongside Remedicare's:

- Relationships, Sex and Health Education Policy;
- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy;
- Behaviour and Regulation Policy;
- Staff Code of Conduct;
- Staff Concerns & Conduct Protocol;
- First Aid and Administration of Medicines Policy;
- Health and Safety Policy;
- Risk Assessment arrangements;
- Online Safety Policy;
- Privacy and Data Protection Policy;
- Educational Visits / Off-Site Activities Policy;
- Transport arrangements;
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy; and

- Complaints Procedure.

33. Equality and SEND

Remedicare recognises that substance misuse education and safeguarding responses must take account of individual needs.

Staff must consider:

- disability;
- communication needs;
- cognitive ability;
- SEND;
- neurodevelopmental needs;
- emotional regulation;
- trauma;
- mental health;
- cultural circumstances;
- family circumstances; and
- developmental age.

Learners must not be treated less favourably because of disability or other protected characteristics.

Reasonable adjustments will be considered where required.

34. Review and Monitoring

Remedicare will monitor the effectiveness of this policy through:

- incident records;
- CPOMS records;
- learner voice;
- parent/carer feedback;
- safeguarding audits;
- staff feedback;
- training records;
- risk assessments;

- commissioner feedback; and
- review of emerging risks.

The policy will be reviewed at least annually and sooner where there are:

- changes in legislation;
- changes to safeguarding guidance;
- changes to AP standards;
- emerging substance-related risks;
- significant incidents;
- changes to Remedicare provision; or
- relevant commissioning requirements.