

# **DRUG AND ALCOHOL POLICY FOR INPATIENTS IN NHS LOTHIAN**

## **(PATIENTS/CLIENTS/SERVICE USERS)**

## Drug and alcohol policy

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### **Key Messages**

This policy applies to all healthcare professionals/care staff working in NHS Lothian including locum, bank and agency staff who, on behalf of NHS Lothian, are involved in the direct care of the patients.

NHS Lothian is committed to ensuring working conditions for staff are safe, and does not view violence and aggression as an acceptable part of employment. Our staff have the right to work without the fear of assault or abuse.

Patients are asked on admission not to take any medication (including alternative, homeopathic or complementary therapies) that have not been prescribed or approved by their in-patient clinical team.

NHS Lothian does allow patients to use legal substances, like alcohol, within its premises, but only when their use has been agreed by the multidisciplinary team and can provide a clear therapeutic benefit for the patient.

If a suspected illegal substance is discovered within hospital premises, or a person is found to be in possession of a suspected illegal substance on hospital premises, the procedure for the disposal of a suspected illegal substance must be followed. The procedure is available [NHS Lothian>Area Drug and Therapeutics> Safe use of medicines](#).

The policy can be found at [Homepage>Healthcare>Clinical Guidance](#)

### **Minimum Implementation Standards**

#### **Good Practice for Managers**

- Has identified the staff in his or her area to whom this policy applies and has given the policy (or selected excerpts) to them.
- Has assessed the impact of the policy on current working practices, and has an action plan to make all necessary changes to ensure that his or her area complies with the policy.
- Has set up systems to provide assurance to him or her that the policy is being implemented as intended in his or her area of responsibility.

#### **Good Practice for Employees**

- Has read the policy (or selected excerpts) and considered what it means for him or her, in terms of how to conduct his or her duties.
- Has completed any mandatory education or training that may be required as part of the implementation of the policy.
- Has altered working practices as expected by the policy.

### 1. Introduction

- 1.1 The law places an obligation on NHS Lothian to ensure that no illegal drugs possession or supply takes place within its premises. This policy aims to ensure that there are robust systems in place to prevent such activities from taking place within its premises and on its grounds.
- 1.2 The misuse of drugs and alcohol by patients in healthcare settings presents an enormous challenge to staff as this can seriously affect the ability of services to assess, treat and care for patients safely and effectively.
- 1.3 All workplaces have legal responsibilities to look after the health and safety of their staff through the Health & Safety at Work Act 1974 and the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971.
- 1.4 For prevention and early identification of alcohol and substance related problems among staff, please refer to the [Employment policies and procedures: Alcohol and substance use policy and procedure](#)
- 1.5 This policy does not cover the pharmacological management of substance misuse.

### 2. Aim of the policy

- 2.1 This policy aims to ensure that there are robust systems in place to prevent unsafe activities from taking place within its premises and on its grounds.
- 2.2 To reduce or eliminate alcohol and drug misuse by visitors and patients within NHS Lothian premises.

### 3. Key objectives

- 3.1 To state clearly NHS Lothian's policy on Drugs and Alcohol.
- 3.2 To protect patients, public and other staff from disadvantage or danger through misuse of drugs or alcohol.
- 3.3 To enable NHS Lothian to identify, and help any patients who have problems related to the misuse of drugs or alcohol.
- 3.4 To ensure that staff respond to substance misuse issues in a safe, effective and sensitive way with due regard to the patient's wellbeing.
- 3.5 To provide staff with guidance on the procedure to be followed on discovery of a suspected illegal substance within NHS Lothian's premises.
- 3.6 To allow clinical staff the opportunity to ensure that alcohol can be provided to patients, where appropriate, in a safe and therapeutic manner.

### 4. Policy scope

- 4.1 This policy applies to all clinical staff and clinical areas within NHS Lothian.

### 5. Related policies

NHS Lothian Safe Use of Medicines Policy & Procedures  
The NHS Lothian Policy for the Management of Violence and Aggression  
Patient's funds and valuables policy/procedure

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Procedure for searching patient's belongings  
Mental Health Observation – A Good Practice policy  
Policy on the Use of Alcohol, Illicit Substances and Non-Prescribed Drugs within  
Royal Edinburgh Hospital  
Alcohol withdrawal protocol  
Complimentary therapies Policy

### 6. NHS Lothian drug and alcohol policy for patients, clients and service users

- 6.1 NHS Lothian is committed to ensuring working conditions for staff are safe, and does not view violence and aggression as an acceptable part of employment. Our staff have the right to work without the fear of assault or abuse.
- 6.2 Patients are asked on admission not to take any medication (including alternative, homeopathic or complementary therapies) that have not been prescribed or approved by their in-patient clinical team.
- 6.3 NHS Lothian does allow patients to use legal substances, like alcohol, within its premises, but only when their use has been agreed by the multidisciplinary team and can provide a clear therapeutic benefit for the patient.
- 6.4 Alcohol must be stored in a locked cupboard, trolley or fridge in line with the Safe use of medicines policy and procedures.
- 6.5 On admission clinical staff will document the patient's belongings and complete an inventory of their belongings in line with the patient's funds and valuables policy.
- 6.6 If a suspected illegal substance is discovered within hospital premises, or a person is found to be in possession of a suspected illegal substance on hospital premises, the procedure for the disposal of a suspected illegal substance must be followed. The procedure is available NHS Lothian>Area Drug and Therapeutics> Safe use of medicines.
- 6.7 If a visitor is in possession of illegal drugs or alcohol and is supplying these to inpatients, against the instructions of clinical staff they will be asked to leave immediately and reported to the police. If they do not leave, staff should ask the security and/or police for assistance, in order for the visitor to be safely removed from hospital premises.
- 6.8 NHS Lothian will ask any visitor to leave if they are engaged in the supply of illegal substances or alcohol. The Ward manager or Senior Charge Nurse, in consultation with the multidisciplinary team, have the right to prohibit any visiting in the future and will write to them informing them of any decision.
- 6.9 For those patients that continually present intoxicated, either returning from pass or while on the ward, causing a disturbance to other patients NHS Lothian will explore all options to ensure that patients and staff are safe. These options include, but are not limited to, early discharge, police intervention and transfer to a more secure location.

### 7. Planned discharge from the ward

- 7.1 If an **informal patient** continues to use alcohol and/ or drugs, and it is felt by the MDT that their main problem is with substance misuse then a **planned** early discharge is an option. The [NHS Lothian Discharge Policy and procedure](#) should be followed.

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- 7.2 It is crucial that as part of this process the MDT considers the risk implications of the substance misuse in terms of increasing risk behaviours such as self harm, suicide and violence prior to a decision to discharge. This risk assessment should be clearly documented.
- 7.3 The patient, if they are willing to engage, should be referred to the NHS Lothian Drug and Alcohol Team. The Drug & Alcohol/substance misuse service staff need to be fully appraised of any mental health/risk issues in order to be able to alert further mental health services if the person fails to engage on discharge.
- 7.4 For **all detained patients and some informal patients** who cannot be safely discharged to the community, an MDT review of their treatment and care will take place at the earliest opportunity. This review may lead to their leave from the ward being temporarily withdrawn (if detained), a limit on their visitors if appropriate or other sanctions.
- 7.5 If a patient with complex mental health needs and with drug or alcohol problems is discharged, rapid follow-up arrangements need to be agreed and the use of the Care Programme Approach should be considered.

## 8. References

The management of harmful drinking and alcohol dependence in primary care A national clinical guideline, Scottish Intercollegiate Guidelines Network, Guideline 74: (September 2003)

**Dual diagnosis in mental health inpatient and day hospital settings** *Guidance on the assessment and management of patients in mental health inpatient and day hospital settings who have mental ill-health and substance use problems* Department of Health (2006)

Prashant Phillips & Sonia Johnson, (2003), "Drug and alcohol misuse among in-patients with psychotic illnesses in three inner-London psychiatric units", *Psychiatric Bulletin* 27, 217-220

Selim M. El-Bhadri & Graham Mellsop, (2006), "Aggressive behaviour in an acute general adult psychiatric unit", *Psychiatric Bulletin* 30, 166 -168

NHS Shetland Drug and Alcohol policy and procedures available at <http://www.shb.scot.nhs.uk/board/policies/DrugAndAlcoholPolicy.pdf> Last Accessed 13th January 2014

**Appendix 1: Managing a patient intoxicated by Alcohol or Drugs**

