Millennium Farm Trust

GN1.3 Policy on Alcohol, Drugs and Substance Misuse V03

Review date March 2027

Version Control

Version number	Date of changes	Who	Review summary
02	03/03/19	T Freathy	Annual review.
	Jan 20	NA Hunter	Annual review. No changes
	Feb 22	T Freathy	Annual Review No changes
	Feb 24	T Freathy	Annual Review No changes
03	Aug 2026	T Freathy	Policy updated to clarify impairment, prescribed medication, safeguarding, support, reporting and arrangements for leaving the Farm safely.

1. Purpose

Millennium Farm Trust (MFT) is committed to providing a safe, healthy and supportive environment for everyone who works at, attends or visits Depden Care Farm.
Alcohol and drugs can impair judgement, coordination, concentration and behaviour and may therefore present significant risks in a working farm environment involving animals, tools, machinery, vehicles and vulnerable people.
The purpose of this policy is to:

- Protect the health, safety and welfare of everyone at Depden Care Farm.
- Ensure that nobody undertakes Farm activities while impaired by alcohol or drugs.
- Provide a clear and proportionate response where alcohol or drug use causes concern.
- Recognise that alcohol or drug dependency may require support and appropriate professional help.
- Protect Farm Helpers and young people from safeguarding risks associated with drugs or alcohol.

2. Scope

This policy applies to:

- Staff.
- Volunteers.
- Farm Helpers.
- Children and young people.
- Contractors.
- Visitors.

It applies while at Depden Care Farm, undertaking MFT activities away from the Farm, driving or operating equipment on behalf of MFT, and at other times where alcohol or drug use has a direct impact on a person's ability to undertake MFT activities safely.

3. Policy

No person may undertake work or Farm activities where their ability to do so safely is impaired by:

- Alcohol.
- Illegal drugs.
- Misuse of prescription or non-prescription medication.
- Misuse of solvents or other substances.
- Any other intoxicating or psychoactive substance.

Alcohol must not normally be consumed during working or Farm activity hours.
Illegal drugs must not be possessed, supplied, distributed or used on MFT premises or during MFT activities.
No person may drive a vehicle, operate machinery or power tools, work with animals, undertake other safety-critical activities or provide supervision or support where their ability to do so safely may be impaired by alcohol or drugs.

4. Prescription and Non-Prescription Medication

MFT recognises that many people legitimately take prescribed or over-the-counter medication.
Taking medication in accordance with medical advice does not in itself constitute a breach of this policy.
Staff and volunteers should consider whether medication or its side effects could affect their ability to work safely, particularly where their duties include:

- Driving.
- Operating machinery or power tools.
- Working at height.
- Working with animals.
- Lone working.
- Supervising or supporting Farm Helpers or young people.

Where there may be a safety implication, the person should inform their manager so that appropriate arrangements or temporary adjustments can be considered.
Staff are not expected to disclose unnecessary details about their medical condition or medication.
Where medication taken by a Farm Helper or young person may affect their safe participation in Farm activities, this should be considered through their individual risk assessment and support arrangements.

5. Fitness to Work or Participate

Everyone undertaking Farm activities must be fit to do so safely.
Where a member of staff reasonably believes that a person may be impaired by alcohol or drugs, the immediate priority is safety.
The person should be removed from any activity which could present a risk to themselves or others.
This may include preventing them from:

- Operating machinery, tools or vehicles.
- Working with animals.
- Undertaking physical or higher-risk activities.
- Supervising others.
- Continuing to participate in Farm activities.

The Director or nominated senior member of staff should be informed.

6. Responding to Suspected Impairment

Signs of impairment can have many causes and should not automatically be assumed to result from alcohol or drug use.
Where there is concern, staff should respond calmly and sensitively and consider whether the person may instead be:

- Unwell.
- Experiencing a medical emergency.
- Experiencing a reaction to prescribed medication.
- Distressed or experiencing a mental health difficulty.
- Affected by another condition or circumstance.

Where appropriate, first aid or medical assistance should be sought.
If alcohol or drug impairment is reasonably suspected, the person should not continue with activities where this may place themselves or others at risk.

7. Leaving the Farm Safely
A person who appears significantly impaired by alcohol or drugs must **not simply be instructed to leave without consideration of their safety**.
Appropriate arrangements should be made according to the circumstances.
These may include:

- Asking a family member, carer or support worker to collect them.
- Arranging safe transport.
- Contacting their placing organisation where appropriate.
- Seeking medical assistance.
- Calling the emergency services where there is an immediate risk to health or safety.

A person who appears impaired must not be permitted or encouraged to drive away from the Farm.
Where a person insists on driving despite a clear and immediate safety concern, the police may be contacted.

8. Farm Helpers
Where there are concerns about alcohol or drug use by a Farm Helper, MFT will consider:

- The immediate health and safety risk.
- The person's individual needs and circumstances.
- Their capacity and understanding where relevant.
- Whether there is a safeguarding concern.
- Whether parents, carers, support workers or the placing authority should be informed.
- Whether the person's risk assessment or support arrangements need to be reviewed.
- Whether specialist support should be encouraged or sought.

The response will be proportionate to the circumstances and focused on maintaining safety and supporting the individual.
Repeated incidents may require a formal review of the person's placement where MFT cannot reasonably manage the resulting risks.

9. Children and Young People
Children and young people must not possess, consume, supply or be under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs while attending Depden Care Farm.
Any concern involving alcohol or drugs and a child or young person will be considered as a potential **safeguarding and welfare concern**, not simply a behavioural or disciplinary matter.
The Designated Safeguarding Lead or Deputy will be informed where appropriate.
Depending on the circumstances, MFT may also inform:

- Parents or carers.
- The placing school or education provider.
- The commissioner or placing authority.
- Children's social care.
- The police.

Decisions will be made in accordance with MFT's safeguarding procedures and the individual circumstances.

10. Possession, Supply or Use of Illegal Drugs

Illegal drugs must not be brought onto, possessed, used, supplied or distributed on MFT premises or during MFT activities.
Any suspected illegal substance should be dealt with cautiously. Staff should not taste, smell or otherwise unnecessarily handle an unidentified substance.
The Director and, where relevant, the Designated Safeguarding Lead should be informed.
The circumstances will be assessed before deciding what further action is required.
Possession or use of an illegal drug will not automatically result in a report to the police in every circumstance. The Director will consider the nature and seriousness of the incident, safeguarding implications, the age and vulnerability of the person concerned and any relevant legal responsibilities.
Suspected supply, dealing, exploitation or coercion will be treated as a serious matter and may require referral to the police and/or safeguarding agencies.

11. Staff and Volunteers
Staff and volunteers must not:
- Attend work while impaired by alcohol or drugs.
- Consume alcohol during normal working hours except where specifically authorised for an appropriate event.
- Possess or use illegal drugs at work.
- Misuse prescription or non-prescription medication at work.
- Supply alcohol or drugs to Farm Helpers or young people.
- Undertake safety-critical activities where medication or another substance makes it unsafe to do so.

Where a staff member or volunteer breaches this policy, the matter may be dealt with under the appropriate disciplinary or volunteer procedures.
However, where a person discloses a dependency or substance-misuse problem, MFT will seek wherever reasonably practicable to support them to obtain appropriate help.

12. Support
MFT recognises that problematic alcohol or drug use may be associated with dependency, physical or mental health difficulties, personal circumstances or other underlying needs.
Staff and volunteers are encouraged to seek help at an early stage where alcohol or drug use may be affecting their work, wellbeing or safety.
Where appropriate, MFT may:
- Encourage the person to seek advice from their GP or an appropriate specialist service.
- Consider reasonable temporary adjustments to duties.
- Agree a period of support or monitoring.
- Signpost to appropriate external support.
- Consider occupational health advice where available and appropriate.

Seeking help will not in itself be treated as misconduct.
This does not prevent MFT taking appropriate action where behaviour, safety or performance concerns require it.

13. Alcohol at Events
MFT may occasionally permit alcohol at an authorised social, fundraising or other event.
Where alcohol is permitted:
- The Director or event organiser must approve the arrangements.
- Appropriate licensing requirements must be observed.
- Alcohol must not be supplied to anyone under the legal drinking age.
- Nobody responsible for driving, machinery, animals, supervision or other safety-critical duties may become impaired.
- Appropriate non-alcoholic alternatives should be available.
- The safety and needs of Farm Helpers and young people must be considered.

Normal Farm activities involving machinery, tools or other significant hazards should not take place where alcohol consumption forms part of an event.

14. Confidentiality

Information disclosed about a person's alcohol or drug use will be treated sensitively and shared only where there is a legitimate reason to do so.
Confidentiality cannot be guaranteed where information must be shared to protect the person or others, meet safeguarding responsibilities or comply with the law.

15. Incident Reporting

Significant incidents involving alcohol or drugs will be recorded through MFT's incident-reporting arrangements.
Where appropriate, the person's risk assessment or support arrangements will be reviewed following an incident.
Patterns or recurring concerns should be considered as part of MFT's wider safeguarding, health and safety and quality-assurance arrangements.

16. Related Policies

This policy should be read alongside:

- GN1 Health and Safety Policy.
- GN1.1 Fire Safety and Fire Risk Management Policy.
- GN1.2 Smoking and Vaping Policy.
- GN1.4 Lone Working Policy.
- Relevant Safeguarding Policies.
- Positive Behaviour Support Policy.
- Staff Disciplinary and Grievance Procedures.
- Incident Reporting Procedures.

17. Responsibilities and Review

The Director is responsible for the implementation of this policy.
All staff and volunteers are responsible for understanding and complying with the policy and for raising concerns where alcohol or drug use may present a risk.
The policy will be reviewed annually and sooner where:

- Relevant legislation or guidance changes.
- A significant incident identifies a need for review.
- MFT's activities materially change.
- Experience indicates that existing arrangements are no longer adequate.

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