

CASE STUDY
A NOSE
FOR DRUG
DETECTION



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Gayle Brown, student services manager at Oaklands

CALLING IN THE EXPERTS WITH SPECIALLY TRAINED DOGS



Oaklands College in Hertfordshire is a three-site further education college with provision for some 10,000 students, from 16 year olds to mature students.

Drug use and dealing is something high on the agenda of the management to prevent and involves a team from several departments: facilities management, security, and safeguarding, the latter a part of student services.

Not everyone will have one or more sites to look after involving so many people, and don't forget there are the staff as well, and this presents a daily challenge to everyone involved in facilities management.

Drugs may not be an issue in your organisation... but is it? Have you any idea what really goes on in your building? What happens on the site when everyone has gone home, or at the weekend? Drug paraphernalia such as needles and other equipment and residue of noxious substances can be dangerous and needs careful handling by experts.

NIPPING IT IN THE BUD

“The issue of drugs is something we’re all very much aware of,” says Gayle Brown, student services manager at Oaklands, “and we believe we are as on top of the situation here as we could be. We are extremely pro-active on the subject, with visible security on duty, continuous staff training to deal with the issue with students when it arises, and to watch out for it and endeavour to nip it in the bud before it becomes a major problem. In fact, the students think there is far more of a problem here than is the reality.”

Gail adds: “We have some 3,500 16-18 year olds at Oaklands and herbal cannabis is normally what we find, either joints or in vapes, and many of the students have no idea about its legal status.”

“The policy at Oaklands is very much about counselling and advice to the students about drugs generally, with ‘prevention being better than cure’, being the policy of college management. Students are offered guidance and help to deal with their problems.” Gayle believes this is why they have been so successful to date in keeping the issue well in hand.

SNIFFER DOGS A SUCCESS

A specially trained dog and handler have visited all three Oaklands sites and the dog was allowed to sniff everywhere. Lockers, classrooms, libraries, food outlets, social areas and even the students themselves together with their belongings as they go in and out.

“This is the first year we have used this security option to deal with any potential drug problem at Oaklands and it has proved a great success... not only in being a highly visible deterrent, which is so important, but in finding users or distributors which then enables us to offer counselling and proactive measures to help those involved”, said Gail.

Even if the students haven’t brought any substances on to campus, cannabis residue is very ‘sticky’ and remnants remain on clothes, from the previous night for example, which the dogs can easily detect.

Trained sniffer dogs are able to identify individual scents when there are dozens of other scents in the same area – perfect for sniffing around a college where there are thousands of students.

DRUG-RELATED REQUESTS ON THE RISE

Leigh Hooper, head of sales at Clearway, comments: “Generally we use security dog handlers to secure or protect empty buildings as an ongoing or temporary measure, but we are seeing an increase in requests where trained dogs and handlers are required to assist in actual or potential drug related problems. These can be in an educational campus, public building or a commercial enterprise.”

“Sniffer dogs are highly trained animals and will soon raise an alert if a problem is detected. It may be a building or site is being used for illicit drug dealing, or it’s become an unofficial venue for anti-social behaviour and drug taking. Whatever the situation, the dog will soon sniff it out and enable the site manager to take appropriate action.”

To find out how Clearway can help you:

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