

ALCOHOL AND DRUGS AT WORK

Policy Fact Sheet

ALCOHOL AND DRUGS AT WORK DO NOT MIX.

Drug and alcohol misuse has serious implications for employees' health, safety and performance in the workplace.

The company takes its responsibilities for the safety and welfare of its employees very seriously and this is why we have an alcohol and drugs policy.

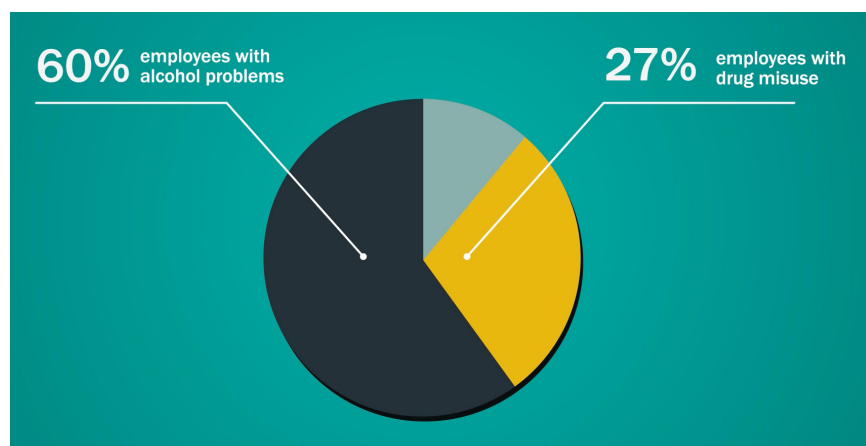
This factsheet is designed as guidance and education to help you understand the policy.

The policy applies to all employees – and it is your responsibility to understand the policy.

Take a few minutes to read through the different sections of this factsheet and understand what the policy means to you.



IS IT REALLY THAT BIG A DEAL?



Research suggests that 60% of employers across all sectors have employees with alcohol problems and 27% with drug misuse.

The Health and Safety Executive believe problems associated with alcohol use are responsible for up to 5% of all absences from work.

The Alcohol Harm Reduction Strategy estimates that lost productivity as a result of alcohol costs the economy 6.4 billion pounds a year.

Perhaps most worryingly of all – Alcohol Concern believe that employees who misuse alcohol are two to three times more likely to be involved in workplace accidents.

This means increased safety risks not only for the individual concerned, but also colleagues and members of the public.

So it should come as no surprise that we think alcohol and drug misuse at work **is a big deal** – and this is why we have a zero tolerance approach to any misuse whilst at work.

THE LEGAL POSITION

Employers have a general duty under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 to ensure, as far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare of employees.

This means if an employer knowingly allows an employee under the influence of excess alcohol or drugs to continue to work and places this employee or others at risk, the employer could be prosecuted.

Similarly, employees are also required under the Act to take reasonable care of themselves and others who could be affected by what they do.

In addition, it's important to remember that operating a car whilst under the influence of drink or drugs is illegal. This is particularly important for employees whose job involves driving or travelling to different sites.

Finally – it is a criminal offence to be unfit through drugs and alcohol while doing work that is designated as safety critical.

WHY THE POLICY EXISTS

As your employer, we're committed to providing a safe and productive work environment – where the health, safety and wellbeing of our employees is priority.

That is why the alcohol and drugs policy exists – **to protect employees and to encourage people who are suffering to seek help.**

The alcohol and drugs policy covers the use and misuse of intoxicating substances, which include:

- Alcohol
- Solvents
- Legal and illegal drugs
- Prescription and over the counter medicines
- Other substances that could adversely affect work performance and health and safety

This policy applies to you – in fact, it applies to all employees including those on part time or temporary contracts, consultants, agency and other people working for or on behalf of the company.

So it's really important that you understand your responsibilities and we'll explore them in more detail in this next section.



EMPLOYEE RESPONSIBILITIES

Under the policy employees must report for work, and remain throughout the working day, in a fit and safe condition to undertake their duties and not be under the influence of alcohol or drugs.

Employees must not consume alcohol or drugs at any time while at work, including during rest or meal breaks spent at or away from work premises. Exceptions apply to drugs prescribed for the individual or over-the-counter medicines used for their intended purpose (in accordance with the instructions given by the prescriber, pharmacist or manufacturer) and where the safety of the individual or others with whom they come into contact is not compromised.

Employees are not permitted to possess, store, trade or sell controlled drugs on organisation premises or bring the organisation into disrepute by engaging in such activities outside of work. The only exception would be where an employee has a prescription.

Employees must notify their manager immediately should they be prescribed medication or plan to take over-the-counter medicines that may cause side effects and impair their ability to undertake their duties safely and effectively. This is particularly important if they occupy a post where it is not only their own personal safety but those of others that could be jeopardised. Similarly, employees who experience side effects as a result of taking prescribed or over-the-counter medicines that impair their ability to perform their duties safely and satisfactorily must notify their line manager immediately.

Intoxicating substances such as alcohol may remain in your system for some time and even small amounts can impair performance and jeopardise safety. Employees are personally responsible for allowing sufficient time for the intoxicating substance to leave their system before reporting for work.

Employees are strongly encouraged to seek help if they have concerns regarding their alcohol or drug consumption. It is recommended that they approach either their line manager or HR department in the first instance so that the organisation can arrange for the provision of appropriate support to help speedy rehabilitation, for example referral to the occupational health service, medical professionals, professional drug and alcohol treatment agencies.

Employees are expected to co-operate with any support and assistance provided by the organisation to address an alcohol or drug misuse problem.

Employees should not, even with the best of motives, 'cover up' for, or collude with, a colleague with an alcohol- or drug-related problem but instead should encourage the individual to seek help. Where the individual concerned does not wish to come forward to seek help, and their colleague genuinely suspects that the individual may be misusing drugs or alcohol, they have a responsibility to raise their concerns with the employee's line manager.

MANAGERS COMMITMENT

Your managers are trained to support you with any issues relating to alcohol and drugs at work. It is important that you have the confidence to come forward and seek help either for yourself or others without fear of consequence.

So in this section you can explore what responsibilities your manager has and how problems would be dealt with.

First and foremost it is your manager's responsibility to ensure the health, safety and welfare of employees and others with whom they come into contact.

Managers must be aware of the signs of alcohol and substance misuse and the effects on performance, attendance and health of employees.

Managers must ensure that employees understand the alcohol and drugs policy and are aware of the rules and consequences regarding the use of alcohol, drugs and other intoxicating substances.

Managers must make sure that employees are aware of the support that is available to them should they have a problem.

Managers will intervene at an early stage where changes in performance, behaviour, sickness levels, and attendance patterns are identified to establish whether alcohol or drug misuse is an underlying cause.

Managers are there to provide support and assistance, where appropriate and for a reasonable period, to employees who are dependent upon intoxicating substances to help their recovery.

Finally - Such matters will be treated confidentially as far as is legitimately and legally possible.

HOW CAN I GET HELP?

Don't be afraid to ask.

If you think you or someone you know is developing a drugs or alcohol problem, get help immediately.

Tell your supervisor, manager or HR manager who can support you.

Don't forget that there are loads of useful contacts and support sites where you can get additional independent advice and information on the topics we've covered.

Alcoholics Anonymous

24-hour helpline 08457 697 555

Frank about drugs

Free confidential drugs information and advice helpline 0800 77 66 00

www.talktofrank.com

Also

www.drinkaware.co.uk

www.alcoholconcern.org.uk

FINAL SUMMARY

So we've learnt that the inappropriate use of alcohol or drugs can damage your health and wellbeing with far reaching effects on your personal and working lives.

At work, alcohol or drug misuse can result in reduced levels of attendance, substandard work performance and increased health and safety risks.

This policy exists because we're committed to providing a safe and productive work environment - where the health, safety and wellbeing of employees is priority.

If you would like more information on the topic covered, you should speak with your line manager, HR Department or Safety representative.

Be safe at work and remember if you are dealing with a drug or alcohol related problem, the company is here to support and help you.