

# Alcohol, Drug & Substance Misuse Policy

Health, Safety & Wellbeing



## 1. INTRODUCTION

The Council is committed to providing a safe, healthy and productive working environment. It recognises that the misuse of alcohol, drugs (including prescribed drugs) and substances such as solvents can affect service quality, increase the risk of accidents, increase the amount of sickness absence and lead to disciplinary problems. Above all, it can ruin lives.

## 2. AIMS

The policy aims to:

- (i) Create a climate of opinion in which employees who misuse alcohol, drugs and substances, their colleagues and managers all appreciate that it is in everybody's interest that the problem is identified, acknowledged and professional help sought at an early stage.
- (ii) Enable all employees with misuse problems to be referred to an appropriate agency for diagnosis and if necessary treatment.
- (iii) Provide training to help employees recognise the problem and the possible solutions.
- (iv) Set out the appropriate use of the Procedures for Dealing with Conduct or Capability Issues to assist and support employees with problems.

## 3. SCOPE

The policy applies to all employees. It is particularly relevant to those who drive, operate machinery or work at heights.

## 4. POSSIBLE SIGNS OF MISUSE

- 4.1 Alcohol, drugs and substance misuse can become apparent in a number of ways. These include: -
- impaired performance
  - unexplained absence
  - poor time keeping
  - bad decision making

- accidents
- increased sickness absence
- mood swings, apathy, depression, lack of concentration, unreliability
- poor personal hygiene

4.2 There could be other explanations for these signs and the list is not exhaustive. Care must be taken not to assume that they automatically signify an employee has a misuse problem.

## 5. TAKING ACTION

5.1 If a manager becomes aware that an employee's behaviour has become unsatisfactory, they must consider the possibility that it is related to alcohol, drug and substance misuse. If they consider that misuse is a possibility they will:

- (i) arrange a private meeting to express these concerns and find out more
- (ii) encourage the employee to seek help by contacting the persons or agencies shown in paragraph 9.
- (iii) advise the employee that:
  - (a) they will be given paid time off for counselling and/or treatment and that matters will be dealt with in the strictest confidence
  - (b) should the employee decline to seek assistance or discontinue the treatment before its satisfactory completion and their behaviour continues unchanged, the manager will deal with the matter in accordance with either the Procedure for Dealing with Capability Issues or the Procedure for Dealing with Conduct Issues whichever is appropriate.

5.2 If, during or after treatment, an employee's behaviour again becomes unacceptable because of alcohol, drug or substance misuse, the manager will give the employee a further opportunity to undertake counselling or treatment. If this in turn fails to stop the misuse or the employee refuses to undertake the treatment or counselling, the manager will instigate either the Procedure for Dealing with Capability Issues or the Procedure for Dealing with Conduct Issues whichever is appropriate.

5.3 There may be instances where a single action involving the misuse of alcohol, drugs or substances constitutes gross misconduct or a gross lapse in competency. In such instances the action will be subject to

the Procedures for Dealing with Conduct or Capability Issues and the employee's dependency on alcohol, drugs or substances will be taken into account in deciding what disciplinary action to take.

- 5.4 It could be that it is the affected employee who is the first to recognise they have an alcohol, drug or substance misuse problem, in which case they should contact the persons or agencies shown in paragraph 9 for confidential advice.
- 5.5 Employees must not, even for the best of motives, cover-up for a colleague whose work is suffering as a result of alcohol, drug or substance misuse. Where it is known or suspected that a colleague has a misuse problem they should be encouraged to seek help and the matter brought to the attention of the colleague's manager. Where the misuse is by a manager then the employee should report their concerns to the manager's manager.

## **6. CONFIDENTIALITY**

Managers will observe the strictest confidence in dealing with alcohol, drug or substance misuse cases. They should be aware that the agencies mentioned in paragraph 9 also observe high levels of confidentiality.

## **7. TIME-OFF FOR COUNSELLING AND TREATMENT**

- 7.1 Employees will be given reasonable paid time-off to receive counselling and treatment. Continued eligibility to paid time-off will depend upon the length of time treatment is taking and the needs of the service.
- 7.2 The employee's manager has the right to ask for evidence of appointments for counselling and treatment.

## **8. TRAINING**

- 8.1 The Council will provide training to make employees (especially managers) aware of the dangers of alcohol, drug and substance misuse. From time to time, additional information will be made available to employees as part of the Council's health improvement initiatives.
- 8.2 Each new employee will be given a copy of this Policy when they start their employment.

## **9. HELP AND ADVICE**

Help and advice can be obtained from the following:

Druglink 01923 260733

Workplace Options 0800 243 458

The employee's Guide

Paul O'Day, Corporate Health & Safety Lead Officer x 2472

HR can provide general advice on the policy