

H1 – Opening Statement

Alcohol & Drugs

Drug and alcohol misuse can be a serious problem not only for the misuser but also for the business where he/she works and, sometimes, for his/her co-workers. The possession of some drugs is illegal, exposing the misuser to the risk of criminal charges as well as causing harmful effects to his/her health. You could be breaking the law if you knowingly allow drug-related activities in your workplace and you fail to act. Social functions arranged by employers are also to be monitored for the presence, or misuse, of drugs.

It is highly recommended that responsible employers acquaint themselves with the signs of alcohol and drug misuse. The Alcohol and Drugs Procedure provides an overview of the possible indicators of drug and/or alcohol misuse. Although there may be an innocuous reason for an employee's erratic behaviour or appearance, it is important to remember that all kinds of people are involved in drug (and alcohol) misuse — they do not conform to any stereotype. A lot of people who are involved in drug misuse are in work.

Employers should be aware of the legal implications of alcohol and drug misuse at work, both for their company and for their employees. The following is a list of relevant legislation:

- Misuse of Drugs Act 1971
- Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 (HSW Act)
- Road Traffic Act 1988
- Transport and Works Act 1992
- Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999.

All organisations, large and small, can benefit from an agreed policy, applying to all staff, on drug and alcohol misuse. Such a policy should form part of your organisation's overall health and safety policy. Many large organisations have policies that describe their position on drug misuse. A written drugs policy has many advantages, for example leaving less room for misunderstanding than an informal 'understanding'.

Remember, it is good practice to have a policy even if you do not find any evidence of current drug misuse. A policy which is in place will enable you to deal with any future problems which may arise. Many employers have introduced specific policies to deal with potential problems of drug or alcohol misuse, not least because substance misusers can pose health and safety risks to themselves and others at work.



H1 – Alcohol & Drugs

What is this?

This is a written procedure which covers all aspects of control of the use of alcohol and drugs within the workplace.

The person responsible for implementing this procedure is:

Who is responsible?

The responsible manager is responsible for implementing this procedure, he/she must:

- Identify if an alcohol and drug issue exists within the workplace
 - Inform all employees of the effects associated with alcohol and drugs, and promote a positive attitude regarding the responsible use of alcohol
 - Enforce the message that consumption of alcohol or misuse of drugs, at lunchtime, break periods, or at any other time during the course of employees' working day is forbidden
 - Encourage and assist employees who suspect or know they have a problem to seek help at an early stage
 - Ensure all chemicals that could be used for solvent abuse are kept locked away in a secure place, and monitor any abnormal or suspicious usage
 - Be vigilant of any employee who shows signs of intoxication at work and, if necessary, make arrangements for the employee to be immediately escorted from company premises to a place of safety, eg home
 - Advise the responsible director if an employee is suspected of being under the influence of alcohol or drugs, or has been suspended for being under the influence of alcohol or drugs
 - Ensure that no alcohol or prohibited drugs are consumed by employees at work or on company premises
 - If required, introduce regular testing of employees in relation to identifying if an alcohol and drug problem exists.
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What do employees need to do?

Employees need to:

- Refrain from consuming alcohol and drugs during the course of their working day
- Report for work free from the influence of alcohol and drugs
- Make the responsible manager aware of any prescribed drugs they are taking
- Make the responsible manager aware of any persons who may be under the influence of alcohol and drugs.



Effects of alcohol and drugs

Alcohol or drug abuse may influence work performance (even if the abuse takes place outside the workplace). The following may be indicators that an employee has an alcohol and/or drug problem:

Physical signs:

- Smell of alcohol, etc on breath
- Bloodshot or dilated eyes
- Slurred speech
- Hand tremors
- Erratic behaviour (hyperactivity)
- Loss of appetite
- Lowered personal standards.

Mood swings:

- Irritability
- Depression
- General confusion.

Work performance:

- Difficulty concentrating
- Work requiring increased effort
- Individual tasks taking more time
- Problems remembering instructions or own mistake.

Absenteeism:

- Instances of unauthorised leave
- Frequent Friday and/or Monday absences
- Leaving work early
- Poor time-keeping
- Excessive level of sickness absence
- Unusually high level of sickness from colds, flu, stomach upsets, etc.



Exemptions

Some medication prescribed by doctors can affect work performance; examples are tranquillisers, sleeping tablets, hay fever and blood pressure medication.

Employees taking any medication should be encouraged to inform the responsible manager of:

- The type of medication
- Any possible effects or side effects which may affect work performance, especially their ability to drive or operate machinery
- Any emergency action which may be necessary if the medication is not taken or not effective.

If the responsible manager suspects that medication is being taken, a tactful investigation may be necessary.

Help and assistance

If employees acknowledge that they have a problem it should be discussed with the responsible manager who may seek assistance from a medical professional.

Help and treatment, where appropriate, will only be offered following a thorough review of the circumstances surrounding the case, subject to the responsible director's approval.

- Note:** All requests for help will be treated in the strictest confidence. The storing of written information will become necessary, and will be carried out in accordance with the requirements of the Data Protection Act 1998.
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Legislation

- Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974
- Drug Misuse Act 1974
- Data Protection Act 1998

