



DRUGS, ALCOHOL  
AND SUBSTANCE  
MISUSE POLICY FOR  
THE WORKPLACE

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**ABSTRACT**

This Policy is to raise awareness amongst staff of the effects of drugs and alcohol and the impact on themselves and the workplace of inappropriate use

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Please think before printing this document.

Where printing is necessary, please ensure that it is printed double sided and in greyscale.

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## Introduction

Peterlee Town Council recognises that drug, alcohol, and substance misuse are growing social and medical problems, which can lead to accidents at work, reduced efficiency, poor decision making and lost productivity. In order to address these issues, the Council is committed to having procedures which:

- Minimise drug, alcohol, and substance misuse related problems in the workplace, through promoting a sensible attitude to alcohol and a greater awareness of the risks of taking other drugs
- Offer support and advice for employees experiencing difficulties related to alcohol or drug use

This policy relates to instances where individuals have become dependent upon alcohol or drugs. It does not apply to isolated instances of misconduct or absence from work caused by the effects of excessive alcohol or drugs. In this instance, misconduct will be dealt with under the normal disciplinary rules.

## The Objective of this Policy is to:

- Comply with our legal responsibilities
- Assist managers and team leaders in dealing with substance misuse-related incidents in the workplace
- Establish clear, easily understood guidelines for dealing with misconduct, arising from substance misuse
- Demonstrate the Council's commitment to staff health and safety
- Raise awareness amongst staff of the effects of drugs and alcohol and the impact on themselves and the workplace of inappropriate use

## How to Recognise the Problem

In most cases it is the behaviour associated with drug, alcohol and substance misuse that will be evident to both managers and colleagues.

Listed below are a number of indicators. It is essential to note that these indicators could equally apply to other illnesses or stress. It is important to thoroughly examine each situation before acting.

- Patterns of depression or fatigue (often after the weekend)
- Absenteeism – short term / frequent patterns
- Poor timekeeping
- Erratic performance
- Lack of discipline
- Unusual irritability or aggression culminating in harassment
- Over-confidence
- Sudden mood swings
- Inappropriate behaviour
- Reduced response times
- Becoming easily confused
- Reduced productivity
- Deterioration in relationships with colleagues, customers or management
- Financial irregularities
- Dishonesty and theft

**Remember:** These are only signs – they can all be caused by other factors.

The cornerstone of this policy is the commitment to regard drug, alcohol and substance misuse as a health and social problem, which may affect work performance. The guidance aims to enable the individual to seek help in order to maintain his/her performance at work. The success of this guidance depends upon a joint commitment from management and employees.

This policy seeks to ensure that support and assistance is proactively offered to employees' as appropriate and available to those seeking help. It is also recognised that the alcohol/drug problems of a family member may impact upon employees' work efficiency. This guidance provides a background of advice and assistance which managers should consider in any disciplinary hearings where alcohol and/or drugs might be a contributory factor to poor performance or misconduct.

What should I do if I suspect an employee's work is being affected by drug, alcohol, or substance misuse?

The following points will help by providing a process for dealing with the matter in an effective way:

- Deterioration in performance/conduct identified: substance misuses suspected
- Manager must gather facts/evidence in preparation for a meeting with the employee and discuss with Manager
- Manager meets with the employee to discuss facts, dates, issues
- At the meeting manager determines whether the employee admits to having a problem with substance misuse
- After the meeting, manager decides if he/she continues to believe that the employee's performance/conduct is being affected by substance misuse

When poor work performance is identified as being related to substance misuse it is important to:

- Identify the problem within its work context.
- Clearly explain the action required of the employee to overcome this problem.
- Employee referred to Occupational Health to determine any possible underlying medical condition and to identify appropriate support mechanisms.
- Occupational Health in conjunction with the employee/manager agree an action plan, monitoring mechanisms and timeframe for support. Inform the employee that there is the expectation that they will commit to a support programme where one has been put in place. Make the individual aware that relapse could result in disciplinary action.

If no medical problem identified or the employee does not agree to a referral to Occupational Health, the Manager in consultation with the Town Clerk will, consider the use of other Council procedures. If the employee is committing an act of misconduct, the formal procedures will apply. Where an employee's capability is in question the Council's normal procedures will be applied. N.B: as the Manager has been involved in investigating the matter, it is likely any disciplinary/capability hearing will need to be heard by a more Senior Manager/Town Clerk.

At all times it is vital to ensure that the matter is dealt with in a totally confidential way. It should be handled in the same way as any other health related condition.

This kind of information is sensitive personal data under the Data Protection Act 2018 and Human Rights Act 1998 and could be retained on an individual's personnel records etc. Also, conjecture or gossip must be excluded from official memos or individual personnel records. If staff lack faith in the Council's ability to monitor confidentially the policy will not function effectively.

## What are Disciplinary Issues? Disciplinary

What constitutes a disciplinary issue? – Some examples are:

- The use of drugs as defined by the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 during the working day (except those prescribed and over-the-counter medication. Many prescribed and over-the-counter medications can impair performance. All staff have a responsibility for reading medicine advice given / supplied with their medicines and seeking medical advice where appropriate);
- Working under the influence of drugs, alcohol, or other substance.
- Being in possession of an illegal substance in the workplace.

## Terminology

For the purposes of this policy, the term 'drug' includes prescribed medicines, 'over-the-counter medicines', solvents and substances controlled under the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971.

## Roles and Responsibilities

The following roles and responsibilities will ensure that the guidance is implemented and applied equally to all staff.

### Managers

- To be familiar with this guidance, local resources and services
- To set a good example through their own responsible use of alcohol

- To be aware of the effects of drug, alcohol and substance misuse and be alert to and monitor changes in work performance and attendance, sickness and accident patterns
- To take appropriate and early intervention where potential alcohol or drug misuse has been identified
- To identify any aspects of the work situation which could contribute to alcohol or drug misuse and take action to change them
- To observe strictest confidentiality as far as is practicable
- To co-operate with evaluation of this guidance
- When organising work or social events, to pursue good practice by ensuring that ample supplies of non-alcoholic drinks are available

### Employees

- To urge colleagues to seek help if they have a drug, alcohol or other substance misuse related problem
- To avoid covering up or colluding with colleagues
- To seek help from managers, GP or other outside agency, if they are worried about their own alcohol or drug use
- To use alcohol responsibly
- To be aware that the consumption of alcohol or any substance prior to entering the workplace puts him/her and colleagues at greater risk of accidents and a loss of efficiency
- To ensure they are conversant with disciplinary rules and this guidance
- To avoid the use of illegal substances or any substance which may affect their work or which might place them at risk of accidents, loss of efficiency or effectiveness

### What should I do if I suspect a customer is using drugs on the premises?

Any person seen to be using drugs on the premises will be ejected immediately and barred for a minimum period of 12 months.

<b>Author of Policy;</b>	<b>Corporate Services Manager</b>
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