

DRUG AND ALCOHOL POLICY

Introduction

The inappropriate use of alcohol or drugs can damage the health and well-being of employees and have far-reaching effects on personal and work lives. At work, alcohol or drug misuse can result in reduced levels of attendance, sub-standard work performance and increased health and safety risks not only for the individual concerned but also for others, including work colleagues, members of the public and other contractors. Furthermore, the effects of alcohol or drug misuse are likely to be detrimental to WMQ's reputation and its ability to deliver high-quality services.

WMQ is committed to providing a safe and productive work environment and to the health, safety well being of its employees. This Drug and Alcohol Policy is designed to ensure that employees are aware of the risks associated with alcohol/drug misuse and the consequences, including the legal consequences, of their actions.

Objectives

The policy aims to:

- Raise staff awareness of the risks and potential harm to health associated with the use of intoxicating substances
- Set out the rules regarding the use of intoxicating substances so that employees are aware of the likely consequences for their employment of misusing them
- Create a climate that encourages employees who may be misusing drugs or alcohol to come forward and seek help
- Provide a framework to enable instances of substance misuse by employees to be handled in an appropriate, fair and consistent manner
- Achieve a balance between supporting employees who come forward with a problem and the overriding need to preserve the health, safety and welfare of employees and others* with whom they come into contact, WMQ's reputation and the delivery of high-quality, effective services.

* section 2 of the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974

Scope

- This policy covers the use and misuse of intoxicating substances, which include alcohol, solvents, legal and illegal drugs, prescription and over-the-counter medicines and other substances that could adversely affect work performance and/or health and safety.
- This policy applies to ALL employees.
- The organisation also expects agency and sub-contractors, working on its behalf to comply with this policy. Failure to do so is likely to result in the working arrangements being terminated.
- Managing drug and alcohol misuse at work

Managers' responsibilities

- Be aware of the signs of alcohol and substance misuse and the effects on performance, attendance and health of employees (see guidance at end of this document)
- Ensure the health, safety and welfare of employees and others with whom they come into contact
- Ensure that staff understand the policy and are aware of the rules and consequences regarding the use of alcohol, drugs and other intoxicating substances
- Monitor the performance, behaviour and attendance of employees as part of the normal supervisory relationship
- Intervene at an early stage where changes in performance, behaviour, sickness levels, or attendance patterns are identified to establish whether alcohol or drug misuse is an underlying cause
- Instigate disciplinary measures where appropriate to do so.
- When a manager is aware, or suspects, that an employee is misusing intoxicating substances they are strongly advised to seek advice from a relevant director on the approach to be adopted.
- Such matters will be treated confidentially as far as is legitimately and legally possible. For example, it may be necessary in order to provide effective support for information to be shared with others including occupational health or any other agencies.

Employee responsibilities

- Employees are required to familiarise themselves with this policy and comply with its provisions.
- They are expected to present a professional, courteous and efficient image to those with whom they come into contact at all times. They therefore have a personal responsibility to adopt a responsible attitude towards drinking and taking prescribed and over-the-counter drugs.
- 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 are strongly encouraged to seek help if they have concerns regarding their alcohol or drug consumption. It is recommended that they approach their line manager in the first instance.
- 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(s) genuinely suspect that the individual may be misusing drugs or alcohol, they should inform their line manager.

At work

- 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 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.

Outside working hours

- Employees must not consume intoxicating substances before attending work.
- Intoxicating substances such as alcohol may remain in the 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.

Breaches of the policy

There will be circumstances where breaches of the policy, whether dependency-related or not, will be treated as a disciplinary matter and may result in the summary dismissal of the employee. Examples of issues that will be subject to disciplinary action, including the possibility of dismissal, are:

1. Deliberate disregard for personal safety and that of others associated due to the use of intoxicating substances
2. Unacceptable behaviour in the workplace associated with the use of intoxicating substances
3. Being found incapable of performing duties satisfactorily and safely as a result of consuming alcohol or taking drugs
4. Consuming intoxicating substances during the working day including rest and lunch breaks.
5. Possession, consumption, dealing/trafficking, selling, storage of controlled drugs either on work premises or engaging in such activities outside of work
6. Being disqualified from driving as a result of alcohol or drug-related offences (employees required under their contract of employment to drive a vehicle)

This list is illustrative only and should not be regarded as exclusive or exhaustive. Disciplinary action will be in all cases proportionate to the circumstances of the breach of the policy.

Where evidence warrants, the organisation will inform the police of illegal drug use or any activity or behaviour over which there are concerns as to its legality. For example, it would be necessary to report criminal behaviour associated with alcohol abuse such as having a drink-driving accident in a work vehicle.

Definitions

Intoxicating substance – a substance that changes the way the user feels mentally or physically. It includes alcohol, illegal drugs, legal drugs, prescription medicines (for example tranquillisers, anti-depressants, over-the-counter medicines), solvents, glue and lighter fuel.

Controlled drugs – these are drugs covered by the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971. They include both drugs with no current medical uses as well as medicinal drugs that are prone to misuse. All are considered likely to result in substantial harm to individuals and society.

Harmful/problematic use or misuse – use of an intoxicating substance or substances that harms health, physical, psychological, social or work performance but without dependency being present.

Dependency – a compulsion to keep taking an intoxicating substance either to avoid effects of withdrawal (physical dependence) or to meet a need for stimulation or tranquillising effects or pleasure (psychological dependence).

Addiction – a state of periodic or chronic intoxication produced by the repeated intake of an intoxicating substance. This means that a dependency has developed to such an extent that it has serious detrimental effects on the user and often their family as well, and the individual has great difficulty discontinuing their use.

Guidance

Physical warning signs of drug use can include the following;

- Bloodshot eyes, pupils larger or smaller than usual.
- Sudden weight loss or weight gain.
- Deterioration of physical appearance, personal grooming habits.
- Unusual smells on breath, body, or clothing.
- Tremors, slurred speech, or impaired coordination.

Signed: Gordon McArthur

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Managing Director

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