Drug and Alcohol Policy

Introduction

This Policy is applicable to all permanent and temporary employees, agency workers and anyone working as a consultant, volunteer or trainer for the Council and is recommended to schools as best practice.

Drug, alcohol or substance misuse can endanger health and render employees incapable of safe working or travelling and impair judgement. This may make affected employees a danger to both themselves and others.

The Council recognises that the provision of a quality service is dependent on all of its employees. This Policy reflects the Council's desire to promote and maintain the safety, good health and wellbeing of its workforce.

The following documents are relevant to this policy:

- Corporate Health, Safety and Wellbeing Policy
- Code of Conduct
- Disciplinary policy and process
- Supporting Attendance Policy
- Grievance Policy

Definition of Drug misuse:

Drug use that harms social functioning – either dependant use (physical or psychological) or use as part of a wider spectrum of problematic or harmful behaviour.

The Policy aims to:

- Encourage employees who have an alcohol or substance misuse problem to seek help voluntarily.
- Provide a consistent framework for the management of drug, alcohol and substance misuse
- Prevent the risk of accidents and injuries by employees suffering from the effects of drug, alcohol or substance misuse.
- Promote the health and wellbeing of employees.
- Raise the awareness of employees as to the risks of drug, alcohol and substance misuse.

2. Policy Statement

Illegal substances must not be brought onto Council premises.

Drinking alcohol above the legal drink driving limit or drug and substance misuse is not permitted during breaks from work, travelling to and from locations on work activities e.g. lunch breaks and/or whilst wearing council uniform

Employees must not be perceived as being incapable of properly conducting themselves or performing their duties due to drug, alcohol or substance misuse.

Where drug, alcohol or substance misuse is perceived as liable to impair judgement, performance or endanger the health and safety of others, the employee will immediately be instructed to stop work by their line manager, or other senior manager and if appropriate sent home or suspended from their duties by their Head of Service. The length of the suspension will be determined by the service manager in consultation with the Human Resources Consultancy Team.

If an employee has been prescribed drugs which might affect performance at work, the matter should be discussed in confidence with the line manager and added to an employee health plan – employees need not disclose to the manager why they are taking the prescribed drugs. Occupational Health will be able to advise if there is any uncertainty about prescribed medication. Following this advice will be given by the Corporate Safety Health and Wellbeing team regarding the ability to work safely.

The Council recognises that a drug, alcohol or substance misuse problem may be an illness to be treated the same as any other illness and will offer help to employees for drug, alcohol or substance misuse, provided it is sought voluntarily and they do not wait until action has been started under the formal procedures to do so. Employees may ask for help, in confidence, at any time, and will not be disciplined for seeking help for a drug, alcohol or substance misuse problem. In addition employees may choose to ring the Employee Assistance Programme for confidential advice.

If an employee denies that they have a drug, alcohol or substance misuse problem or if they delay disclosure, it may be dealt with under an appropriate policy and procedure.

3. Recognising Drug, Alcohol and Substance Misuse Problems

Drug, alcohol or substance misuse is an extremely sensitive and confidential matter and is not always easy to identify. However misuse may present itself in some of the following ways:

Alcohol Misuse

- increased absence or increased sick leave
- arriving late; particularly mornings or returning from lunch

- unconvincing excuses for absence or lateness
- frequent visits to the bathroom.
- disregard for own or others health and safety
- difficulty with concentration
- poor judgment, bad decisions
- complaints from colleagues or others
- over-reaction to real or imagined criticism
- irritability, attacks of temper or distress
- physical or verbal abuse of colleagues
- neglect to appearance and hygiene
- hand tremors
- flushed face
- smell of alcohol

Drug, Solvent or Other Substance Misuse

The signs of drug and other substance misuse can be similar to those outlined relating to alcohol misuse, however the effects of different substances and signs of intoxication can vary.

Signs associated with drug misuse include:

- a tendency to become confused
- unbalanced emotions
- injecting can cause infection such as sores, abscesses, jaundice or blood poisoning
- sudden changes in behaviour, mood and energy
- unexpected irritability or aggression
- Poor work performance, being chronically late to work, appearing tired and disinterested in work duties
- Changes in physical appearance, such as wearing inappropriate or dirty clothing and a lack of interest in grooming
- Drastic changes in relationships
- A noticeable lack of energy when performing daily activities
- Spending more money than usual or requesting to borrow money
- Issues with financial management, such as not paying bills on time
- Changes in appetite, such as a decreased appetite and associated weight loss
- Bloodshot eyes, poor skin tone, and appearing tired or run down
- Defensiveness when asked about substance use

These signs may not be attributed to a Drug, Alcohol or Substance misuse related problem, but the possibility should be borne in mind.

4. Roles and Responsibilities

Employees

It is an employee's responsibility not to allow Drug, Alcohol or Substance misuse to interfere with his/her ability to carry out their duties or conduct and to comply with this policy.

Employees who feel they have a drug, alcohol or substance misuse problem should discuss it with their manager and take up the help available at the earliest possible time. The issue will be dealt with in confidence.

Where an employee feels unable to discuss the problem with their manager confidential advice and help may be obtained by contacting their Trades Union representative or HR Consultancy team. Confidential advice and help may also be obtained by contacting The Employee Assistance Programme on 0800 111 6387.

Employees who have reasonable cause to suspect that a colleague at work is under the influence of alcohol and/or drugs (whether or not there is a perceived risk to their own health and safety and that of others exposed to their activities), must report this to their line manager or a senior manager at the earliest opportunity and in the strictest confidence.

Employees are responsible for their safety and the safety of others at work. They must be able to carry out their work competently and with due regard for the safety of members of the public, their colleagues and themselves.

Employees should check whether any drug(s) they are taking as prescribed by a medical practitioner or otherwise may affect their performance, conduct and/or attendance. If they are unsure, they should seek medical advice from their GP. They should also inform their manager.

The Council will ensure that anyone who acts in good faith to disclose a concern or wrongdoing will be protected under the terms of the Whistleblowing Policy.

Managers

The manager should create an atmosphere where employees feel able to discuss a drug, alcohol or substance misuse problem with them and should be especially careful of confidentiality.

If an employee discloses an alcohol or substance misuse problem, the manager should offer to discuss it and the existence of this policy and its provisions should be fully explained.

The employee should be treated as supportively and sensitively as possible and should be encouraged to involve her/his trade union representative.

If the manager does not feel confident to deal with the problem, or if the employee wishes outside help, the manager can contact HR Consultancy for advice and guidance.

Managers should ensure that no employee, agency member of staff, contractor or volunteer undertakes duties where there is reasonable cause to suspect they may be under the influence

of alcohol or drugs. In these circumstances managers should liaise with their manager, HR Consultancy Team or relevant agency /direct employer where appropriate.

Managers are expected to fully investigate instances of possible intoxication, and take action where there are concerns about safe working. The employee will immediately be instructed to stop work by their line manager and if appropriate suspended from their duties by their Head of Service.

Where disclosures of ongoing addiction problems have been made, managers should ensure that appropriate risk assessments are conducted to ensure the safety of the employee and their colleagues.

Managers should report to the police, either directly or via Internal Audit, instances of possession or supply of controlled substances taking place on the premises for which the manager has responsibility.

5. Arrangements for Support

Employees who volunteer that they have a drug, alcohol or substance misuse problem will be treated as supportively and sensitively as possible.

Employees who request assistance via their manager can be referred by the manager, in conjunction with HR Consultancy, to an external specialist agency and to develop a treatment plan that is acceptable to all parties.

The plan should include the time that the employee would reasonably require to be away from the workplace.

Reasonable requests for time off to obtain support, advice and treatment should be granted.

If the employee does not reasonably sustain commitment to any arrangement made for a programme of support the council is not obliged to continue to support such an arrangement or to offer further opportunity or support whether or not formal procedures are being applied.

6. Managing performance and disciplinary matters

Managers should be supportive of employees seeking help for drug, alcohol or substance misuse problems but consideration should be given as to whether formal action to address performance, conduct or attendance is appropriate and needed.

Where performance, conduct or attendance is affected by an employee's misuse of drugs or alcohol, they may present such misuse as mitigating evidence within any formal process and the manager should consider mitigating evidence and employee compliance with support programmes.

Possession or supply of controlled substances by employees will be considered in relation to the council's Disciplinary policy.

7. **Assistance for Drug and Alcohol Misuse**

For people requiring help, advice or treatment for any drug problem they should contact Horizons, Bristol's Drug & Alcohol Partnership, www.horizonsbristol.co.uk

Please note that these external support services listed may only be accessible by employees who reside in Bristol, and that employees are advised to check with their GP for services available in their local area.