

Alcohol and drugs policy

Alcohol and drug misuse can have an adverse effect not just on an individual but on their colleagues, customers and the public. Having a safe working environment, providing excellent customer service by maintaining productivity levels and avoiding days being lost to illness are all critical to our success.

The Company requires all employees to comply with the alcohol and drugs policy. Breaches of the policy will be taken very seriously and may be dealt with under the Company's disciplinary procedure.

For the purpose of this policy, the term "drugs" means illegal substances (or legal substances which induce similar effects to illegal drugs) or other substances, e.g. solvents. Drug misuse also refers to the misuse of prescribed medication.

Policy

Employees must not attend work, drive or perform their work duties, under the influence of alcohol or drugs under any circumstances.

Employees must not drink alcohol or take drugs during working time or be under the influence of drugs or alcohol. Working time is any time between when an employee reports for work and the time they finish work and includes lunchtimes. It includes any period of call out whilst on standby duty or overtime working.

The use, possession, storage, transportation, promotion and/or sale of drugs or drug equipment is forbidden during working time, whether in the workplace or at another location on business.

Employees may be required to undergo testing for alcohol or drugs in their system in certain circumstances.

Prescribed medication

The policy does not stop employees from using prescribed medication, over-the-counter medication or herbal remedies. However, medication such as tranquillisers, sleeping pills, painkillers, decongestants, cough suppressants, antihistamines (for treatment of hay fever or other allergies) and antidepressants can make people feel drowsy and may affect their work performance or the safety of themselves or others. If an employee is taking any medication they should:

- check the possible side effects with their doctor or pharmacist and
- let their line manager know, in confidence, that they are taking medication and the possible side effects. Their line manager will, if necessary, make alternative arrangements for them.

Assistance

If an employee comes forward voluntarily and seeks help for an alcohol or drug problem, they will be given help and support by the Company. If an employee thinks they have a problem and may be violating this policy as a result, the Company strongly encourages them to come forward and seek help. The Company will be sympathetic and ensure the employee gets the help and support they need which may include direction to external specialists. If an employee volunteers information to the Company that they have an alcohol or drug problem, they will be treated with dignity at all times.

Any discussions will be in the strictest of confidence.

The Company recognises that employees may continue to struggle with alcohol or drug dependency even after they have sought and are receiving assistance. The Company will make every effort to provide ongoing support to employees.

Absence

If employees are absent from work due to their attendance for treatment in relation to alcohol or drug abuse, that absence will be treated as normal sickness absence.

Formal procedures

Whilst the Company will be sympathetic to employees who are experiencing difficulties with alcohol and drugs, it may be appropriate to implement a disciplinary or capability procedure where conduct or performance is not satisfactory, which could result in termination of employment.

Criminal activity in the workplace involving drugs will, in every case, require the Company to alert the police.

Testing

The benefit of testing is that it provides an objective way of measuring whether an employee has used alcohol or drugs rather than relying on the personal opinion of a colleague.

Tests will be carried out where management has reasonable grounds to believe that an individual within the scope of this policy is under the influence of alcohol or drugs.

The test will be carried out by an independent and reputable external screening Organisation, under a tightly controlled procedure, ensuring the results are fair, accurate and objective. Tests are carried out in the strictest confidence and privacy, and with dignity.

An employee may nominate a colleague or trade union representative to witness the test where this is reasonable and practical, and the Company will try to arrange this where requested. The Company will take appropriate action in response to any attempt by an employee to falsify a test result and this may result in disciplinary action under the Company's disciplinary procedure, up to and including dismissal.

Where an individual has taken a test and then been required to leave the premises and the screening result is not available by the time they should next start work, depending on the circumstances requiring them to be tested, they will either remain suspended from duty on contractual pay or be re-allocated to risk-free work until the results arrive.

An employee refusing to be tested under the provisions of this policy may be subject to appropriate action including disciplinary action under the Company's disciplinary procedure, up to and including dismissal.

All personal data collected for this purpose will be processed in line with the current Data Protection Act 2018.

Work events

Some employees will, in the course of their duties, attend events with clients for the purpose of building and maintaining client relationships. It may be that, during some of these events, alcohol will be readily available. Employees at these events are permitted to drink alcohol but must not allow themselves to surpass reasonable levels, become intoxicated or allow their judgement to become impaired. This includes ceasing to drink alcohol when asked to by a manager where that manager reasonably believes that the employee is at risk of causing offence or harm to others, harm to themselves, reputational damage to the Company and/or behaving in an unprofessional manner.