



Principles

There is a clear link between the misuse of alcohol and drugs, and reduced safety and efficiency. The purpose of this policy, which applies to all employees, is therefore:

- To ensure that employees' use of drugs or alcohol does not affect the health and safety of the individuals themselves, their fellow workers or others with whom they come into contact in the course of their work.
- To ensure that employees' use of drugs or alcohol does not affect the efficient and effective operation of Homemaker's business.
- To set out Homemaker's policy on drugs, alcohol and substance misuse.
- To provide a procedure whereby employees who have a problem of drug, alcohol or substance misuse can seek and be offered help.
- To provide guidance on the effects of drugs and alcohol and the symptoms of drug, alcohol and substance misuse.

Homemaker's policy is that the working environment should be free from the influence of drugs or alcohol. This will help to ensure the health and safety of our employees and others with whom they come into contact, to maintain the efficient and effective operation of our business, and to ensure our clients receive from us the service they require.

In addition, no visitor, contractor or agency worker should be allowed access to any Homemaker workplace when unfit due to alcohol, drugs or substance misuse. Any employee escorting such a person must ensure access is denied. Any contractor, visitor or agency worker suspected of breaking any of the rules laid down in this procedure will be removed from the workplace and their respective employers will be informed of the reasons for that removal.

THE EFFECTS OF ALCOHOL, DRUGS AND SOLVENTS

Misuse of alcohol and drugs can cause:

- Absenteeism
- Accidents at work
- Poor performance
- Strained relationships with colleagues
- Lateness
- Long term ill health

Features that may be associated with drug, alcohol or substance misuse:

- Sudden mood changes
- Unusual irritability or aggression
- Confusion
- Increasing unreliability and unpredictability
- Impaired job performance
- Accidents
- Poor time keeping
- Increased short term sickness absence
- On the job absenteeism e.g. repeated absences from post, overlong breaks etc.
- Deteriorating relationships with colleagues, customers or management.

Drugs and solvent misuse

Drug misuse, as well as being illegal, can cause considerable physical and mental harm and can kill. Solvent misuse can have the same effects. The effects of some drugs on the body and the mind may continue for a considerable time after consumption; indeed many drugs are detectable by drug tests for up to two or three months after consumption. The simple advice in relation to drugs is do not use them.

PROCEDURE

- No employee shall report or try to report for work when unfit due to alcohol or drugs (whether illegal or not) or to substance misuse. Whether an employee is fit for work is a matter for the reasonable opinion of management.
- No employee shall be in possession of alcohol or illegal drugs in the workplace. This includes those classified under the Misuse Of Drugs Act, 1971 and Prescription Only Medicines to which they are not entitled.
This procedure does not include situations where an employee may have received a gift or won a raffle whilst at work, and the item in question contains alcohol. In these instances the item should not be consumed on the premises and should be removed

from the workplace at the earliest opportunity, after being recorded in the Gifts Register.

- No employee shall consume alcohol or illegal drugs or misuse any substance whilst at their place of work. This includes any employee who has to entertain customers or suppliers. Employees should not consume alcohol if they intend to return to their place of work. These rules also apply during normal working hours if an employee is away on charity business.
- No employee shall sell alcohol or illegal drugs on Homemaker's premises.

Disciplinary action

Where an employee contravenes the procedure stated above, that contravention will be dealt with under the organisation's Disciplinary Procedure.

Where appropriate, implementation of the Disciplinary Procedure may be suspended while an investigation is undertaken into whether the employee has a problem amenable to treatment. If the outcome suggests this to be likely, the employee should be given every opportunity to undertake suitable treatment. Homemaker may ask the employee to see a nominated medical practitioner to assist with this assessment.

Whether the disciplinary procedure is suspended will depend on:

- The nature of the employee's alleged offence
- The evidence that the employee has a health-related problem
- The attitude of the employee
- Any previous history

Employees who decline to undergo appropriate treatment, or who discontinue treatment before its satisfactory completion, will be subject to the normal disciplinary procedure.

Help available

Homemaker will endeavour to ensure that advice and specialist help are made available to any employee who feels they have a problem with alcohol, drug or solvent misuse. Any employee who seeks the assistance of the organisation in finding treatment for a drugs or alcohol problem has Homemaker's complete assurance of confidentiality.

Early identification and treatment is essential if problems for the employee and for the organisation are to be avoided. **Employees who feel they have a problem are encouraged to come forward and seek assistance.** Employees who wish to seek help and advice should first contact their Line Manager who will endeavour to support the employee to access support from a suitable professional.

During any period of absence from work for agreed treatment, the organisation's normal absence arrangements will apply. See policy on Time Off for Medical Appointments. For periods of sickness, the employee must provide a Self Certification and/or a medical certificate in line with agreed procedures.

In the event that an agreed or recommended course of treatment is not followed by the employee, or is ineffective, lapses in the employee's performance, conduct or attendance will be dealt with under Homemaker's Disciplinary Procedure (capability).

Whilst Homemaker will endeavour to help the individual, if it is felt that the employee is in a job where, due to their alcohol or drug misuse they could:

- present a health and safety risk to themselves or others
- may negatively impact Homemaker's performance

then Homemaker reserves the right to remove the individual from their normal duties until they are certified fit to return to such work.

Employees who are concerned that a colleague is exhibiting symptoms of an alcohol or drug-related problem should notify their line manager. See Whistleblowing Policy. Where employees make allegations in good faith, which subsequently turn out to be unfounded, no action will be taken against them. However, employees making false accusations in bad faith will be subject to the appropriate disciplinary action, which could include dismissal.

Action by line managers

Where a line manager suspects an employee may have a problem with alcohol or drugs that is affecting their work performance, as opposed to suspecting the employee of being guilty of a single instance of drug or alcohol related misconduct (which will be dealt with under the disciplinary procedure), the line manager will initially hold an informal discussion with the employee and if necessary offer the organisation's assistance.

If, however, the employee does not accept this offer of assistance, he/she should be advised to discuss the matter with a colleague/their trade union representative/a family member. If the employee subsequently continues to fail to accept the offer of assistance, his or her performance, conduct or attendance will be dealt with in accordance with the organisation's Disciplinary Procedure (capability). In addition, if Homemaker has serious concerns regarding the possibility of drug, alcohol or substance misuse then they may still refer the employee to a medical practitioner nominated by the organisation.

Working with clients with drug, alcohol or solvent misuse issues

The organisation accepts that, due to the nature of the Homemaker's service and the people referred, it is inevitable that some clients will be current or previous users of alcohol or drugs. In most instances they will be undergoing treatment with a local drug

agency. However the health and safety of staff is vital, and it is still expected that clients will behave in a reasonable manner. Whenever staff feel anyone is not in a fit state to converse sensibly at any time, or presents a threat, they should terminate the meeting.

Any casework issues arising from substance misuse should be discussed with the Line Manager, and each case will be assessed individually. Ultimately, where clients are not able to engage due to drug or alcohol misuse, the service may have to be withdrawn.

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