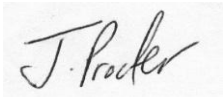


Drug and Alcohol at Work Policy

Review cycle:	1 / 2 / 3 years	Date: November 2023
Approved by:	Full Governing Body / Executive Headteacher	
Changes made in this review cycle:	Date Changes	
Linked policies:		
Signed:		November 2023
Position:	Executive Headteacher	
Date of next Review:	November 2026	



Drugs & Alcohol at Work Policy

Date: June 2021

Document summary

This Policy forms part of the County Council's Health and Safety Management System and should be considered in relation to the County Council's Health and Safety Policy to provide a safe, healthy and effective working environment and to comply with the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971.

This policy is intended to deal with drug and alcohol problems, which in the context of this policy are any drinking and taking of drugs, whether intermittent or continual, which interferes with work performance in relation to attendance, efficiency, productivity or safety.

East Sussex County Council is committed to minimise risks to staff health and well-being while providing a supportive and rehabilitative approach towards alcohol, drugs and substance misuse. In this context, all staff have a personal responsibility to be fit for work during working hours and when conducting duties on behalf of the County Council and those who receive its services.

Contents

Key Points.....	3
Definition.....	3
Introduction	3
Responsibilities.....	4
Chief Officers will:	4
Line Managers will:	4
Employees will:	5
Drugs and Alcohol at Work	5
Identifying Possible Substance Misuse Disorders	6
Advice and Support	8
Appendix 1: Health Issues	9
Appendix 2: Legal Background	10

Drugs and Alcohol at Work Policy

Key Points

- The County Council is committed to providing a safe, healthy, and effective working environment which it is recognised will not only help our staff, but also increase our ability to offer high standards of service.
- The County Council has a responsibility for the health, safety and welfare of its employees and recognises that their wellbeing is important. The aim is for all employees to be aware of the risks associated with drug and alcohol misuse and to ensure that those served by the County Council are not put at risk by the inappropriate use of alcohol or drugs by its employees.
- The policy covers all staff employed by East Sussex County Council whether full time, part time, fixed term employees, as well as contractors, agency workers, volunteers and elected members. For simplicity, all will be referred to as staff within this policy.
- This policy should be read in conjunction with the County Council's Policies on the Safe Use of Motor Vehicles on County Council Business and with the Disciplinary and Grievance Policies and Procedures.
- This policy has been drawn up after consultation with Chief Officers, Departments and Trade Unions and in compliance with relevant legislation.
- Misuse of alcohol and drugs can lead to reduced levels of attendance, reduced efficiency and performance, impaired judgement and decision making, and increased health and safety risks, which can impact not only on the individual but also on their family, friends and work colleagues.

It is recognised that some staff may become dependent on alcohol or drugs. It is also recognised, that with the appropriate support, such dependencies can be successfully treated. East Sussex County Council wishes to promote a culture of understanding which is sympathetic to the problems associated with drug and alcohol misuse in which staff with dependency problems are encouraged to seek help and are supported. However, it is not acceptable for staff to arrive at work under the influence of alcohol and/or drugs and whose ability to work is impaired in any way by reason of the consumption of drugs and alcohol.

Definition

In the context of this policy, "drugs" refers to illicit or illegal substances, prescribed drugs or those brought over the counter.

Introduction

This policy is principally intended to deal with drinking or taking of drugs, whether intermittent or continual, which interferes with work performance in relation to attendance, efficiency, productivity or safety.

You will be deemed to be under the influence of alcohol or drugs where that is the reasonable opinion of a manager or supervisor (or from the evidence provided by colleagues etc).

This policy is not intended to apply to "one-off" incidents or offences caused by alcohol or drug misuse at or outside work where there is no evidence of an ongoing problem, which may damage the Council's reputation, and are therefore likely to be dealt with under the disciplinary policy.

The purpose of this policy is to increase awareness of the effects of alcohol and drug misuse and its likely symptoms and to ensure that:

1. All staff are aware of their responsibilities regarding alcohol and drug misuse and related problems.
2. Staff who have an alcohol or drug related problem are encouraged to seek help, in confidence, at an early stage.
3. Staff who have an alcohol or drug related problem affecting their work are dealt with sympathetically, fairly and consistently.

Responsibilities

Chief Officers will:

- ensure that arrangements are in place for implementing this Policy, where appropriate, through department-specific guidance on its application
- have systems in place for the periodic monitoring of the implementation of this Policy
- ensure that all managers/supervisors are aware of the Policy and the appropriate support available to support relevant employees.

Line Managers will:

- raise awareness of the Policy and its aims with their staff
- ensure that their staff are aware of the risks associated with the use of drugs and alcohol and their potential adverse impact on work performance and safety and the possible compromise to service provision to pupils, service users, etc
- not permit the consumption of alcohol by their staff whilst they are actually at work with the exception of officially sanctioned work events where alcohol is provided
- not permit the consumption of alcohol prior to undertaking safety critical tasks, such as driving, caring for children or vulnerable people, operating hazardous machinery or where contact with hazardous machinery is foreseeable etc.
- be aware of the potential for drug or alcohol misuse at work, adopt a sensitive approach in raising concerns with staff and provide appropriate help and support
- be obliged to take legitimate management action if they consider that an employee's unacceptable behaviour at work is due to their inappropriate consumption of alcohol during lunch/break periods, or immediately prior to work. This may include requiring an employee to refrain from work
- ensure confidentiality is maintained when dealing with drug and alcohol problems in the workplace
- ensure that other employees, pupils, service users, members of the public and those in their charge are not put at risk or adversely affected as a result of the use of drugs or alcohol by County Council employees
- ensure that as representatives of the County Council, employees always behave in a professional manner and that this is not undermined by drug or alcohol use
- identify any work practices that could lead to drug or alcohol problems and seek to improve them;

- encourage employees with drug or alcohol problems to seek help and advise them of the sources of help available.
- offer support to other staff, including if appropriate pupils and service users, whose wellbeing and work performance may be affected by drug or alcohol problems.

Employees will:

- familiarise themselves with the Policy, its aims and their responsibilities in relation to drug and alcohol misuse at work
- maintain a professional approach whilst at work and on County Council business, especially when dealing with pupils, service users, contractors and members of the public
- not be in possession of any illegal drugs whilst working on our sites or premises
- be aware that the consumption of alcohol whilst actually at work is prohibited; with the exception of officially sanctioned work events where alcohol is provided.
- appreciate that any previously consumed drug or alcoholic substances that may affect their performance at work, may still be considered as under the influence, leading to the matter being addressed by their manager
- understand the information provided in the Policy about drug and alcohol use and its effects on work and health, and manage their behaviour accordingly
- encourage colleagues who may have a drug or alcohol problem to seek help. If this approach is not effective, the matter may be raised in confidence with the line manager
- avoid covering up or colluding with colleagues where a drug or alcohol problem is affecting work
- seek out appropriate support and help for drug or alcohol misuse particularly where this may be affecting behaviour or work performance
- ensure that no alcohol is consumed prior to driving, the operation of hazardous machinery or where work in a hazardous environment is likely.

Drugs and Alcohol at Work

All staff are expected to arrive at work, and to return after any breaks, fit and capable of carrying out their jobs and performing their duties safely and without any limitations due to the use, or after effects, of alcohol or drugs.

The consumption of alcohol while actually at work is normally prohibited, with the exception of officially sanctioned work events where alcohol is provided.

Previously consumed drug or alcoholic substances that result in an unacceptable effect on an employee's behaviour or work performance, will be addressed by their manager.

The consumption of alcohol prior to undertaking safety critical tasks, such as driving, caring for children or vulnerable people, operating hazardous machinery or where employees are likely to come into contact with hazardous machinery and/or operation is prohibited. The County Council does not condone illegal activities in association with the use of drugs and would have to take immediate action under the Misuse of Drugs Act should an employee be found to be using or supplying illegal drugs at work. This would mean invoking the disciplinary procedure and referring matters to the Police.

Staff are not permitted to possess, store, trade or sell controlled drugs on ESCC premises or bring the County Council into disrepute by engaging in such activities outside of work.

Employees should be aware that the effects of some drugs, including prescribed and proprietary medications can remain in the system for lengthy periods of time and, if taken prior to or during working hours, can impact on driving, work performance and behaviour. If in doubt, employees should seek medical advice and discuss the situation with their manager.

Identifying Possible Substance Misuse Disorders

The short and long term effects of drugs or alcohol are diverse and vary between individuals.

Whilst the following characteristics, especially when occurring in combination or as a pattern over a period of time, may indicate the presence of an alcohol or drug related problem, it should be emphasised that these signs may also indicate stress, depression, personal problems or an underlying medical condition.

For those reasons, managers should not jump to conclusions and must ensure that they fully explore the causes of an employee's poor attendance, performance or unpredictable behaviour.

As an employer, the Council promotes through its managers, a supportive and caring culture. Therefore, whatever the cause, staff should be treated with dignity and understanding, encouraged, and supported to seek help as appropriate.

Signs and indicators

Absence and patterns of absence:

- high absence level
- multiple unauthorised absences
- absence on certain days especially at the beginning/end of the working week or after 'pay days'
- poor timekeeping
- frequent requests for leave at short notice
- frequent unexplained absence from the work area

Work performance:

- decline in work performance e.g. missed appointments or deadlines
- irregular work pace
- poor memory, concentration or judgement
- lack of attention to detail
- unreliability
- increased error rate
- increased time to complete tasks
- relationship difficulties
- complaints

Behaviour:

- unusual and/or unpredictable behaviour
- confusion, paranoia or anxiety
- forgetfulness
- withdrawal/poor co-operation with colleagues
- irritability
- aggressive behaviour
- depression
- euphoria
- mood swings especially 'mid-week hangovers'

Physical effects:

- tiredness/fluctuations in energy levels
- poor physical appearance and general physical incapacity
- frequent occurrences of certain ailments such as headaches, upset stomach etc.
- flushed face
- hand tremors
- evidence of injuries
- weight loss
- loss of appetite

Accidents:

- high and/or increasing incidence of accidents both in and out of work

Additional signs:

- lack of concern for personal appearance and hygiene
- presence of unusual powders, tablets or capsules
- presence of paraphernalia such as scorched spoons, tinfoil, pipes, needles or syringes
- smell of alcohol
- unusual smells, stains or marks on the body or clothes
- unusual incidences of borrowing money
- incidence of petty theft or other forms of dishonesty.

This is not an exhaustive list.

Please note, factors such as the amount taken, whether this is combined with other substances, the individual's level of tolerance of the substance consumed and the environment in which it is taken all have an effect. Therefore, any sudden change or deterioration in any of these characteristics should be particularly noted.

Advice and Support

If employees are concerned about a drug or alcohol problem within their workplace, whether their own situation or someone else's, they are strongly advised to seek help and advice through the appropriate channels to enable advice, counselling and practical support to be arranged.

The problem should also be discussed with their manager/supervisor, who will treat the matter in strict confidence, and may recommend the involvement of the occupational health service and/or an external specialist agency.

All staff resident in East Sussex are entitled to access specialist support from the 'STAR Drug and Alcohol service'. All referrals are dealt with in strictest confidence. For any staff member whose role may cause accessing such a service problematic, alternative arrangements can be made, e.g. Seeing a client away from the main service venues, being seen by a service in a neighbouring local authority etc. Cases will be dealt with on an individual basis.

For more information please see website

<https://www.changegrowlive.org/content/east-sussex-drug-and-alcohol-recovery-service-star>

For staff living outside East Sussex, similar services will be provided. The website of the relevant local authority should be consulted.

Additionally, help and advice may be sought from GPs and relevant specialist agencies. Information is available from the National Drugs help lines including Alcohol Change UK, Talk to Frank and Drug Wise. National organisations such as Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) and Narcotics Anonymous (NA) have local branches across the county. Information on other local support is also on East Sussex County Council Intranet and in Council libraries.

Some useful websites:

Alcohol Change UK - <https://alcoholchange.org.uk/>

Talk to Frank - <https://www.talktofrank.com/>

Drug Wise - <https://www.drugwise.org.uk/>

Alcoholics Anonymous - <https://www.alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk/>

Narcotics Anonymous - <http://ukna.org/>

The County Council is committed to helping staff overcome problems with alcohol and/or drugs in a sympathetic and confidential manner. Drug and alcohol use disorders will, as far as possible, be dealt with in a similar way to other health issues. However, it may not be possible to maintain confidentiality where there is a clear danger to the individual or to others. This may also apply where a criminal act is involved or suspected.

Appendix 1: Health Issues

- The use of mood enhancing drugs such as alcohol, illegal drugs, prescribed and over-the-counter drugs and chemicals such as solvents can be physically and psychologically harmful, even in small quantities.
- When a substance is used regularly, a tolerance can develop when the body becomes accustomed to it. This means that the user may find that increasing amounts of the substance are needed to create the same effect.
- When alcohol or drugs become an individual's main concern they are considered to be dependent. Dependency has two aspects, psychological and physical. Specialist help, such as counselling, may be needed to help individuals end their dependence.
- There are three main categories of drugs according to their effect.

These are:

Depressants – e.g. alcohol, tranquillisers, heroin and methadone

Stimulants – e.g. amphetamines, ecstasy, cocaine and tobacco

Hallucinogens – e.g. cannabis, LSD, magic mushrooms

- The effects experienced by someone when they use a drug can be difficult to predict and will depend on factors that include the amount and method used, the tolerance of that individual and their mood and surroundings at the time.
- Even though alcohol is widely used and accepted, employees should be aware that it is absorbed into the bloodstream within five minutes and the effect can last for several hours, depending on a combination of factors. Alcohol is a depressant and its effect is to slow down reaction times, impair judgement and co-ordination.
- The combination of mixing different types of alcohol and drugs is particularly dangerous as it can magnify the effects of individual substances and increase the risk of overdose.
- Alcohol increases its depressant effect when mixed with other depressants and can result in sedation, drowsiness, confusion or even coma. An overdose created by depressants can lead to cardiac and respiratory failure.
- The combination of alcohol and stimulants can put a strain on the heart; create unexpected behavioural changes and feelings of anxiety, paranoia or aggression.
- Alcohol and illicit drugs will also interact with prescribed medication leading to behaviour changes, strain on the body and confusion. All of which can have serious health consequences.

Appendix 2: Legal Background

- The Health and Safety at Work Act etc 1974 places a duty on employers to ensure so far as is reasonably practicable the health, safety and welfare of their employees, so that they do not injure themselves or endanger the public or colleagues. This has particular relevance to alcohol, drugs and the use of machinery. Employees also have legal obligations to take care to ensure the health and safety of others who may be affected by their actions at work. This includes members of the public.
- The Road Traffic Act 1988 stipulates that any person driving or attempting to drive a motor vehicle whilst unfit to drive through use of a substance may be prosecuted. This includes driving on County Council business.
- The Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 states that it is illegal to produce, supply or be in possession of drugs covered by this Act unless prescribed by a doctor. Drugs are classified into three categories – Classes A, B and C – according to their potential for harm. Class A drugs are regarded as the most dangerous and so carry the heaviest penalties for misuse. Supply of drugs is punished more severely than possession. Allowing premises to be used for supplying or producing drugs is an offence and carries severe penalties. If this should happen in the workplace, the County Council could be found liable with attendant consequences for both managers and staff.