



Workforce

**Alcohol and Other Substances
Policy**

Aim

The Alcohol and Other Substances Policy aims to:

- Raise awareness of alcohol and substance use.
- Support employees with experience of problematic alcohol or substance use.
- Create a culture where employees feel confident asking for help.
- Create a safe working environment for all staff and service users.

Scope

This policy applies to all employees and workers, including those on bank, agency, or sessional contracts. In this guide, 'employee' includes all these groups unless stated otherwise.

This policy complies with current legislation and meets the aims of the [Public Sector Equality Duty](#) of the [Equality Act 2010](#).

Definitions

For this policy, a **substance** includes:

- Alcohol.
- Drugs controlled under the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 (as amended).
- Misused prescription or over-the-counter medication.
- Solvents.
- All synthetic or herbal products, previously known as new psychoactive substances (NPS).
- 'Legal highs', included under the Psychoactive Substances Act 2016 (as amended).

Misuse is defined as using a substance in a way that:

- Affects your ability to do your job safely and effectively.
- Is illegal.
- Damages the organisation's reputation.
- Negatively affects working relationships.

The World Health Organisation recognises **substance dependency** as a health condition. Affected employees should receive the support they need, just like any employee with another health issue.

Roles and responsibilities

There is a range of standard expectations which underpin all policies. [Read more about standard roles and responsibilities](#). In addition, the following specific responsibilities apply to this policy.

Manager

The manager should:

- Assess the risk and take appropriate action when a situation occurs.
- Manage the situation sensitively and provide the employee with appropriate support.
- Seek advice from HR and occupational health.
- Make management referrals to occupational health and support the employee as required by the relevant policy.
- Make sure employees know what support is available to them.
- Follow the correct workforce policy as needed.

Employee

The employee should:

- Not consume alcohol or other substances before or during their shift, including breaks. This also applies when they are on call or may be required to attend work at short notice.
- Make sure that enough time has passed for any substances to leave their system before starting work.
- Inform their manager immediately if they are prescribed or plan to take any medication that could affect their ability to work safely.
- Speak to their manager in confidence if they are concerned about their own alcohol or substance use.
- Tell their manager if they are concerned about a colleague who may be misusing substances or appears to be under the influence at work.
- Make sure they are familiar with and comply with the policy and procedures.

Identification

Problems with substance misuse can be identified in several ways:

The employee asks for help

If an employee believes they have a substance use problem, they should seek specialist help as soon as possible. Their manager, human resources, or occupational health can direct them to support services.

A concern is raised

A colleague, manager, patient, or service user may notice signs of substance misuse or a change in an employee's work performance, attendance, or behaviour. In this case, the manager should speak with the employee as soon as possible and take appropriate action.

Initial actions

If an incident has occurred or a manager suspects an issue, they should speak to the employee to understand the situation. If the manager believes an employee is under the influence of alcohol or a substance, they must act immediately.

The manager's priority is the safety of the employees, their colleagues, and service users. The manager should take reasonable steps to confirm if substance misuse is a factor. This may involve escorting the employees from the premises and making sure they have a safe way home.

Following identification of a problem

The manager should arrange to meet with the employee as soon as possible to:

- discuss the concerns
- confirm the standards of behaviour expected at work
- agree on a plan of support and action
- consider the next steps

A supportive approach should always be taken. However, some situations may require further action through other NHS Scotland

Workforce Policies or processes. Support can be given to an employee at the same time as these related processes.

Testing at work

NHS Scotland Boards have a legal and ethical responsibility to protect patients and visitors. This duty of care could be at risk if an employee's ability to do their job is affected by alcohol or other substances.

A manager cannot carry out drug or alcohol testing without an employee's consent. If necessary, this must be carefully discussed and agreed upon.

Related policies

The following policies are related to the Alcohol and Other Substances Policy:

- [Conduct Policy](#)
- [Capability Policy](#)
- [Attendance Policy](#)