



Rowlands Gill Primary School

Drugs and Alcohol Abuse

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1. Introduction

It is now recognised that drug and alcohol abuse are problems which cause society as a whole increased violence, crime and other anti-social behaviour. However, they can also cause major disruptions to an employer through decreased efficiency, increased absenteeism and an increased risk of accidents.

Gateshead Council is ideally placed to play an important role in helping its employees to overcome any substance abuse problems which occur. This can be achieved by providing a system of help, care and support. The disciplinary procedure may be used in certain circumstances, e.g. if an employee refuses the offer of assistance in resolving their problem and work performance problems occur.

The purpose of this document is:-

- To help maintain a safe and healthy workforce.
- To clearly define the role of the Council, line managers, Human Resources staff, employees, trade union officials and external organisations in dealing with drug/alcohol problems.
- To encourage and assist in the early identification of employees who are beginning to be affected by the use of drugs/alcohol.
- To encourage employees with a drug/alcohol problem to seek and accept assistance in the knowledge that the Council is committed to providing every reasonable assistance.
- To provide a framework of assistance for employees with drug/alcohol abuse problems which is easily accessible, expert and effective.
- To assist managers in dealing with employees who have, or show clear signs of having, a drug/alcohol abuse problem.
- To outline the employee educational programme to help prevent future problems of substance misuse and to promote a change of attitude towards excessive alcohol consumption.
- To outline the training plan for managers/supervisors in dealing with employees with drug/alcohol problems.

In a situation where an employee is under the influence of alcohol or drugs whilst at work, then this is clearly, and immediately, a disciplinary matter which should be dealt with under the Disciplinary Procedure as misconduct. Following any subsequent disciplinary interview, if the employee remains in the employ of the Council, help may be offered to the person concerned under this policy, if it is felt that there was an underlying cause of alcohol or drug abuse which led to the original offence taking place.



2. Policy

This policy is aimed at educating all employees to help prevent drug/alcohol abuse problems occurring and, wherever possible, to have early detection and treatment of any problems which do occur.

For the aims of the policy to be achieved, it is necessary for the following principles to be accepted:-

- Drug/alcohol abuse, must be tackled through use of specialist help.
- Such a problem may affect any individual in the organisation and, as such, the policy must apply equally to all employees.
- Drug/alcohol abuse is detrimental to both the health and work performance of employees.
- Drug/alcohol abuse can affect the work performance of colleagues and, indeed, the efficiency of the organisation as a whole.
- Drug/alcohol abuse by employees may affect the health and safety of colleagues, clients and the general public.
- Drug/alcohol abuse by employees may affect the image of the Council in dealings with clients and the general public.
- Employees who have, or believe they may have, an alcohol or drug abuse problem should be encouraged to seek specialist help voluntarily and should be advised where this can be obtained.
- An employee who has been identified as having a drug/alcohol problem should be given the opportunity to seek specialist help
- If an employee is asked, or asks, to seek help from a specialist agency then the employee **should** be given paid absence of a suitable duration to undergo treatment, in appropriate cases.
- Career prospects and rates of pay will not be affected as a direct result of the acceptance of referral under the policy.
- Where an employee rejects referral or where help proves unsuccessful, then the disciplinary procedure may be invoked where work performance deteriorates to, or is at, an unacceptable level.
- Information concerning employees referred under this policy is to be treated as highly confidential. Each service will develop appropriate procedures to handle confidential information, and instances of deliberate or unjustified disclosure of



information and breaches of confidentiality will be dealt with under the disciplinary procedure.

- Following referral, if it is felt that a return to previous duties could be detrimental to the long-term resolution of a drug/alcohol problem, alternative employment may be considered where appropriate.

3. Procedure

This procedure is intended as guidance on the course of action to be taken if an employee has, or it is felt they may have, a drug/alcohol problem. It should be remembered that the Council is committed to provide every assistance practically possible to any employee under this policy.

Problem identification

Drug/alcohol problems may come to light in the following ways:

- An employee may voluntarily seek help.

The Council's Occupational Health Officer and Specialist Counsellors from NECA (North East Council on Addictions) will be available for any employee to contact directly in complete confidentiality. Alternatively, an employee may ask his/her line manager or Personnel Services to initiate help, again with complete confidentiality.

- A manager may identify deteriorating work performance or behaviour.

If the supervisor believes that drug/alcohol abuse is the cause, then they should inform their Group or Strategic Director or head of establishment (e.g. school).

- A colleague identifies what he/she believes are signs of drug/alcohol abuse.

The colleague should inform the Group or Strategic Director or head of establishment (e.g. school).

- An underlying problem of drug/alcohol abuse may come to light during a disciplinary, investigatory or other type of interview.

The Group or Strategic Director or head of establishment (e.g. school) should be informed.

- A complaint may be received by the Council from an external source regarding an employee's behaviour. This may be linked to a drug/alcohol abuse problem.
- When an employee is under the influence of alcohol or drugs at work, the manager concerned should ensure that the individual is escorted home safely.



In all cases, an interview should be arranged at the earliest opportunity between the employee and his/her manager. At this stage it is advisable to contact Human Resources who are available to provide advice and assistance.

Managerial interview

Whilst it is recognised that each interview will have a different format according to the particular circumstances of the case, each interview should have the following components:-

- The employee should be confronted with the facts and/or allegations.
- If it is felt necessary, the employee should be offered help under the policy.
- If help is refused, the employee should be informed of the disciplinary consequences of continuing the present pattern of work performance/behaviour.

The interview must be confined to aspects of the employee's work performance and/or behaviour unless the employee raises other issues. The causes of the problem should be identified. Where there is reason to believe that the causes or the source of the problem is work related then appropriate action will be taken. If the employee so wishes, a trade union representative, or friend may be present at this interview.

Discipline

If an employee seriously breaches disciplinary rules, it may be appropriate to invoke the disciplinary procedure either distinct from or in conjunction with this procedure.

Help Accepted

Where an employee accepts an offer of help, the manager should immediately contact Occupational Health who will, as a first step, arrange an interview with the employee.

Following this interview, Occupational Health will, in conjunction with specialist help if necessary, decide on a suitable recovery programme. The programme will need to be discussed and agreed with the employee and then Occupational Health will arrange for its delivery. The method of delivery of the programme should be discussed with the line manager.

The recovery programme will include details of whether or not the employee should be at work during recovery and, if so, whether they should be undertaking all of their normal duties.



Help rejected

Where an employee rejects an offer of help, it should be decided whether it is appropriate to invoke the disciplinary procedure at this stage

or to allow the employee to continue at work in the knowledge that the situation will be under close and constant review. Where it is decided to allow the employee to continue at work, a satisfactory level of work performance and behaviour pattern should be agreed and the employee made aware that should they fail to meet these requirements then the disciplinary procedure may be invoked.

Occupational Health unable to help

If Occupational Health is of the opinion, after consulting the line manager and any relevant specialist agency, that they cannot offer help to the employee (e.g. the employee denies that there is a problem or that there is a need for a recovery programme) then the line manager, in consultation with Human Resources, should decide what action, if any, needs to be taken.

When an employee returns to work and problems recur, then it may be necessary to invoke the disciplinary procedure.

Premature discontinuation of recovery programme

Where the recovery programme is discontinued, by either the employee, Occupational Health or any involved specialist agency, then the line manager should arrange to interview the employee and, in consultation with Human Resources, decide what action, if any, needs to be taken.

Where the employee returns to work after he/she decides to discontinue the recovery programme, if work problems recur then it may be appropriate to invoke the disciplinary procedure.

Special leave of absence during recovery programme

If the line manager and Occupational Health, in consultation with Human Resources, are of the opinion that the employee requires some additional time off work during the recovery programme, then they can make a request to the Strategic Director, Legal & Corporate Services for special leave of absence for the employee (in the case of educational establishments with delegated budgets, the request should be made to the Governing Body). Such requests may range from time off to attend programmed appointments in-between normal work attendance, to ongoing time off.

Granting the request will be at the discretion of the Strategic Director, Legal & Corporate Services or in the case of educational establishments with delegated budgets, the Governing Body.



Completion of recovery programme

When the employee satisfactorily completes the recovery programme, Occupational Health should inform the line manager who should arrange to interview the employee. At this interview, management's expectations of work performance and behaviour in the future should be clearly explained.

The employee will be encouraged to continue his/her efforts and will receive support through periodic interviews with Occupational Health; the frequency of such will be decided upon by Occupational Health at the completion of the recovery programme.

Managers are encouraged to seek guidance and support on the operation and implementation of this procedure from Human Resources.

Any disciplinary interviews which become necessary must be arranged in accordance with the disciplinary procedure.

4. Training

- It is recognised that dealing with drug/alcohol abuse by an employee is a particularly difficult task for a line manager to perform and one which is made easier if the manager has in-depth knowledge of the many problems facing addicts of various substances.

The Council needs to ensure that an adequate number of managers are given training in how to deal in a sympathetic and patient manner with employees who are drug/alcohol abusers.

A suitable training course needs to be identified and following this, Service heads should decide how many, and who, of their employees should attend this course.

On an ongoing basis, services should ensure that an adequate number of managers have the expertise to deal with any problems which may arise.

- To educate and raise awareness amongst new employees, a talk on drug/alcohol abuse should be given on the Induction Course run by Organisational Development .

5. Education

Preventative action to reduce the number of incidents to a minimum is, of course, an integral part of the strategy which needs to be implemented. This involves educating employees as to the dangers involved in excessive drinking, excessive use of prescribed drugs and any uses of illegal substances, be they so-called "hard" or "soft" drugs.



The educational process will take place in three main ways:-

- An employee leaflet

This will detail the dangers involved, what a "safe" level of alcohol consumption is, and how to access confidential and expert help if they feel that they may have a problem.

The leaflet will be distributed to all employees (within payslip envelopes) in the first instance and then a copy will be given to all new employees.

- Health workforce campaign

The issues of drug abuse, alcohol abuse and safe drinking will be tackled along with issues of healthy eating and taking regular exercise as part of a healthy workforce campaign. It is felt by combining all of these issues that the entire campaign can be presented to the workforce in a positive way.

- Local and national initiatives

The Council will continue to support local and national initiatives to help promote a healthy workforce such as "Drink-wise Day", "Look After Your Heart", "No Smoking Day", etc.

6. Definition of roles

The Council

- To raise the awareness of all employees, through education and advice, of the importance of adopting a healthier lifestyle.
- To raise the awareness of all employees, through education and advice, of the dangers of excessive drinking, excessive use of prescribed drugs and any illegal use of drugs.
- To provide training to managers and specialist staff to enable them to effectively operate this policy.
- To review the effectiveness of the policy.

Management

- To be familiar with the policy and procedure.
- To monitor the work and behaviour patterns of employees so as to increase the chances of early detection of a problem.
- To ensure that all employees understand the contents and aims of the policy.



- To refer employees to Occupational Health when appropriate.
- To give support and encouragement to any employee referred under the policy.

Trade Unions

- To assist in the effective operation of the policy.
- To help promote awareness of the policy.
- To encourage employees who may have drug/alcohol problems to seek help voluntarily.
- To accompany employees, who wish to be accompanied, to interviews under the policy.
- To assist the employee in his/her recovery programme.
- To assist the Council to monitor and review the policy.

Human Resources

- To provide advice, guidance and support to line managers on the operation of the policy.
- To help promote awareness of the policy.
- To help review the effectiveness of the policy.

Occupational Health

- To promote the importance of a healthy lifestyle.
- To conduct initial interviews with employees referred and, in conjunction with specialist help if necessary, decide on a suitable recovery programme.
- To co-ordinate recovery programmes.
- To arrange for medical examinations as necessary.
- To provide non-confidential and statistical information on the cases referred to the Council.

Specialist external organisations

- To assist the Occupational Health Officer in deciding upon recovery programmes.



- To counsel employees referred to them and to advise Occupational Health of the progress being made.
- To advise Occupational Health of any premature discontinuation of recovery programmes.
- To provide training and education

