



Oxfordshire County Council Drugs and Alcohol Policy

1.0 Background

1.1 The County Council is committed to providing a safe, healthy and effective working environment for the benefit of all employees and to maintain and increase our ability to offer high standards of service.

1.2 This policy applies to all County Council employees including temporary staff and all employees in schools.

1.3 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 personal and service delivery 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 drugs or alcohol.

1.4 Employees also have a responsibility for their own health and safety and welfare during working hours and outside of working hours where the inappropriate use of drugs and alcohol may affect behaviour and performance at work.

1.5 This Policy should be read in conjunction with the County Council's Policies on Driving at Work and with the Disciplinary & Capability Procedure and Raising Concerns at Work.

1.6 The policy sets out the ways in which employees, who may be experiencing problems through the misuse of drugs and/or alcohol, are treated with care and concern and are provided with appropriate support.

1.7 In this policy the term 'misuse of drugs' encompasses the misuse of over-the-counter or prescription drugs as well as substance misuse e.g. glue, solvents etc.

2.0 Policy

2.1 The taking of illegal drugs is a criminal activity and as such is not condoned by Oxfordshire County Council. The drinking of alcohol is not a criminal activity, it is a matter for individuals to decide for themselves whether it is appropriate to drink alcohol. However, the use of either alcohol or drugs must not adversely impact on safety or the workplace, driving or work performance, compromise service provision to service users, or bring the Council into disrepute.

2.2 The consumption of alcohol while on duty or on Council premises is normally prohibited, with the exception of officially sanctioned work events where alcohol is provided. The same expectations on staff and consequences set out below in paragraph 2.4 apply in respect of alcohol consumption at such events.

2.3 Consumption of alcohol during lunch/break periods and immediately prior to commencing work is discouraged.

2.4 If its consumption results in misconduct or incompetence, this may result in Disciplinary & Capability action.



2.5 Any employee who is unable to perform their duties satisfactorily due to alcohol or drug consumption, will be required to leave work at once. It may be necessary to provide someone to accompany an employee in extreme cases. Investigations will be undertaken to consider whether immediate disciplinary action is necessary.

2.6 Employees in safety critical jobs found to be under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs, will be liable to redeployment or dismissal. Safety critical jobs could include, for example, designated driver functions, working with children or vulnerable people, using potentially dangerous machinery etc.

2.7 The County Council does not condone illegal activities in association with the use of drugs and would take immediate action under the Misuse of Drugs Act (1971) should an employee be found to be using or supplying illegal drugs. This would mean invoking the Disciplinary & Capability procedure and referring matters to the Police. If use outside of work affects an employee's performance at work then appropriate disciplinary action will be taken. In cases where police action is taken for use/supply outside of work then the implications will be considered by the line manager in consultation with HR, this may result in disciplinary action being taken.

2.8 The workplace indicators of inappropriate drug and/or alcohol use may include lateness, absenteeism, poor work and output, poor appearance and unreliability, the smell of alcohol, bad relations with colleagues, impaired speech, concentration, co-ordination, memory or judgement, and accidents.

2.9 Where such indicators, after having been assessed by the appropriate services, are found to be related to drug and/or alcohol misuse, the problem will be regarded initially as a general health matter and normal benefits under sick pay provision will apply. In addition, and as far as is reasonably practicable, time off with pay will be given if the employee is required to attend appointments at a clinic during work hours. Proof of appointments with these services can be requested by the Manager. Support will be given and appropriate referrals can be made either by the employee, or on their behalf, to specialist services. A risk assessment will need to be carried out and adjustments made of duties if necessary (e.g. no driving). The responsibility for accepting treatment, however, will remain with the individual employee.

2.10 In instances where this Policy is not adhered to, or where employees are reluctant or refuse to accept referral to an appropriate helping agency, or where a particular incident of misconduct occurs, use of the Disciplinary & Capability Procedure will be considered.

2.11 The Council would not normally take action affecting an employee's job for reasons of alcohol and/or drug abuse providing s/he is receiving treatment, and there is a sustained, gradual return to satisfactory work performance within a reasonable time period, and provided that this does not constitute a breach of the law.

2.12 Where retention of an employee's job during treatment would constitute such a breach, the Council will make every effort to find a suitable alternative redeployment.

2.13 The Council will consult the employee and ask the Occupational Health



Service for advice concerning the time period which should be allowed for a return to satisfactory work performance. The Occupational Health Service will regularly review the progress of employees during and after treatment.

2.14 The employee will continue to be responsible for his/her work record. If there is no improvement in work performance within a reasonable time period, the normal Disciplinary & Capability procedures will be followed.

3.0 Manager's responsibilities

3.1 Manager's responsibilities are as follows:

- raise awareness of the Policy and its aims with their staff
- be mindful of their role in setting standards of good behaviour
- ensure that their staff are aware of the risks associated with the use of drugs and/or alcohol and their potential adverse impact on work performance and safety, and that it does not compromise service provision to pupils, service users, etc
- not permit the consumption of drugs or alcohol by their staff whilst they are on duty or on Council premises; with the exception of officially sanctioned work events where alcohol is provided
- be able to recognise the signs of potential drug or alcohol misuse at work and adopt a sensitive approach
- 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
- advise staff of the sources of help available, as outlined in Appendix 3.

4.0 Employee's responsibilities

4.1 Employee's responsibilities are as follows:

- 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 service users, contractors and members of the public
- be aware that the consumption of drugs or alcohol whilst actually at work is prohibited with the exception of officially sanctioned work events where alcohol is provided
- not to drink and drive whilst on Council business
- appreciate that if alcohol consumed during lunch/break periods, and immediately prior to work, resulted in an unacceptable effect on their behaviour or work performance, this could lead to Disciplinary & Capability action (also see para 2.3)
- 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 as outlined in the appendices, particularly where this may be affecting behaviour or work performance
- the prolonged use of tranquillisers/anti-depressants can lead to dependence.
- Employees wishing to reduce their use of these prescribed medicines should not do so without medical supervision. Employees on such prescribed medication should ensure that they are monitored and reviewed regularly by their Doctor.
- the effects of some drugs, including prescribed and proprietary medications, taken prior to or during working hours can remain in the system for lengthy periods of time and can impact on driving, work performance and behaviour. If in doubt, employees are expected to seek medical advice and discuss the situation with their manager and/or seek advice from the Occupational Health Service.

5.0 Advice and support

5.1 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 and practical support to be arranged.

5.2 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 adviser and/or an external specialist agency.

5.3 Contact can be made directly to the Occupational Health Service, who can offer confidential information, advice and support.

5.4 Additionally help and advice may be sought from GPs and relevant specialist agencies.

Information is available from the National Drugs helpline, Alcohol Concern and Drugscope websites and County Council libraries. Trade Unions may also be able to offer support and advice.

5.5 The County Council is committed to helping staff overcome problems with alcohol and/or drugs in a sympathetic and confidential manner. However, confidentiality cannot be maintained where there is a clear danger to the individual or to others. This may also apply where a criminal act is involved or suspected.

6.0 Monitoring



6.1 In updating this policy, an impact assessment has been undertaken to take account of the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000, the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and discrimination legislation more generally. This policy will be reviewed again by January 2012.

Steve Munn
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(previous version March

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Related Policies

Disciplinary & Capability Procedure
Dignity at Work
Employing Disabled People
Health and Safety
Raising Concerns at Work
Stress at Work

- all appendices remain unchanged unless any telephone numbers are incorrect? please check numbers and add them into this document.