

MISCELLANEOUS HEALTH AND SAFETY TOPICS

(See also : [Smoking Policies \(78\)](#))

CONTENTS

1. Drug Misuse at Work

**Miscellaneous
Health and
Safety
Topics**

DRUG MISUSE AT WORK

1.1 INTRODUCTION

1.1.1 The HSE has produced a useful leaflet 'Drug Misuse at Work - a Guide for Employers' from which the following advice has been summarised. (The leaflet also gives details on the most commonly misused substances in the UK)

1.1.2 In this element drug misuse will refer to the use of illegal drugs and the misuse, whether deliberate or unintentional, of prescribed drugs and substances such as solvents. You should be aware of the implications to both your employees and business of not tackling drug misuse, particularly where safety is involved. Successfully tackling drug misuse can give benefits as follows:

- saving on the cost of recruitment and placement of new employees
- reducing the cost of absenteeism and lower productivity
- creating a more productive workforce by employee support
- reducing the risk of accidents caused by impaired judgement
- enhancing public perception of your organisation / business

1.1.3 Signs of drug misuse can include the following:-

- sudden mood changes
- unusual irritability or aggression
- a tendency to become confused
- abnormal fluctuations in concentration / energy
- impaired job performance
- poor time-keeping
- increased short-term sickness absence
- a deterioration in working relationships
- dishonesty and theft
- a deterioration in dress and physical appearance
- the development of new and regular behaviour patterns
- the presence of drug taking paraphernalia

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SECTION: Miscellaneous		PAGE No. 1 of 3

1.2 THE LEGAL POSITION

If you knowingly allow an employee under the influence of drug misuse to continue working and his or her behaviour places the employee or others at risk, you may be liable under the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 and the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1992.

The Road Traffic Act 1988 states that any person driving, or attempting to drive, vehicles on a road or other public place whilst unfit to drive through drugs is guilty of an offence.

If you knowingly permit the production/supply of any controlled drugs, the smoking of cannabis or certain other activities to take place on your premises you could be committing an offence under the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971. The penalties for offences involving controlled drugs depend on the classification of the drug (Class A, B or C)

1.3 TAKING ACTION

1.3.1 Step 1 - Find out if you have a problem by considering the factors listed in 1.1.3 above

1.3.2 Step 2 - Decide what to do. This could include thinking about the following:-

- Awareness raising programme for all staff (including on induction)
- Training for (line) managers and supervisors
- Support mechanisms for those with a drug problem
- The need for confidentiality
- Any safety-critical aspects of your work
- Consulting employees
- Talking to local drug misuse and health promotion agencies

1.3.3 Step 3 - Taking Action. A drugs misuse policy may cover the following:-

- Aims
- Responsibilities
- Definitions
- Organisational rules
- Safeguards
- Confidentiality
- Sources of help and information
- Disciplinary action

1.3.4 Step 4 - review if your actions or policy are working

1.4 USEFUL ORGANISATIONS

The HSE leaflet lists a wide range of organisations that may be of use. The following three may be of particular use initially.

ORGANISATION	CONTACT	DETAILS
National Drugs Help Line	0800 776600	Free, confidential, 24 hours a day
North Warwickshire Primary Care Trust Health Promotion Service	(024) 7686 5581	A health promotion specialist is available to give advice/support etc. on drugs misuse and training issues
Alcohol Advisory Service (ADAS)	(024) 7638 5688	A free and confidential service offering advice, information and counselling to people who have a drink problem
Community Drugs Team	(024) 7664 1100	A free and confidential service offering advice, information and counselling to people who have a drug problem

REFERENCES / FURTHER DETAILS

- **1. Leaflet INDG91 'Drug Misuse at Work - a Guide for Employers' (HSE) ISBN 0 7176 2402 1
www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg91.pdf
2. Institute for the Study of Drug Dependence 'Drug Abuse Briefing'
32 Loman Street, London, SE1 0EE.
- **3. Leaflet INDG240 'Don't mix it - a guide for employers on alcohol at work. (HSE) www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg240.htm

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- * Available to view by prior arrangement at Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council, Environmental Health Services, Council House, Coton Road, Nuneaton. CV11 5AA
- ** Free copy available from Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council at the above address.