



FORMING AN EFFECTIVE DRUGS POLICY AT WORK

A drug in any substance, which when it enters the Central Nervous System, alters mind or body. This **does** include alcohol.

What should a drug policy do?

- Alert staff to the problems associated with the misuse of drugs
- Offer encouragement and assistance to all employees who feel they may have a drug problem to seek voluntary help at an early stage.
- Offer assistance to an employee with a drug related problem that comes to light through observation or through the normal disciplinary procedure, for example through poor work performance, absenteeism or conduct.

See the *Supplementary Advice Sheet* for a model policy.

Training

The success of a company's drug abuse policy depends on how well and seriously that policy is communicated to employees. Even the best policy can be completely ineffective if rank and file employees have no knowledge of it. Copies of the policy should be distributed to all staff with a letter from a senior member of management. They could also be hung on public notice boards within the organisation to serve as a reminder.

Supervisors have the most contact with staff and they should have the knowledge to enable them to spot problems. They need specific knowledge of all kinds of drugs and their possible effects so you may need to provide information and training to enable them to implement the policy. (*See Supplementary Advice Sheet for useful contacts*).

Decide if you have a problem

Indicators of drug or alcohol impairment include:

- Performance problems
- Physical appearance (side effects)
- Lack of co-ordination
- Inappropriate mood

Once a problem is suspected the supervisor needs to document related incidents. This documentation will be invaluable when challenging the drug-abusing employee.

Address the problem

The second step is to address the problem with the abusing employee. This should be accomplished peacefully but assertively. Four suggestions for the interview are:

- Begin by expressing concern over the change in the employees work performance.
- Use documentation of specific examples to back up your position.
- Clearly express expectations for change in work behaviour and offer possible suggestions.
- Offer help: (*see the Supplementary Advice for external organisations that may be able to help with counselling etc. if you have no facilities available in-house*).

If an employee approaches management with a drug related problem offer help.

If any employee refuses to undergo treatment, their work performance should be monitored for a specified period. If it remains unsatisfactory the employee should be interviewed again and if necessary disciplinary procedures should be invoked.

If any employee accepts a scheme of help he or she should be asked to sign an agreement drawn up by personnel setting out obligations on both sides. If you do not have a personnel section then you should consult a specialist in these matters.

If the problem has arisen because of the nature of the work then, where possible the person should be re deployed.

The employee should be offered confidentially whilst undergoing a course of treatment. No personnel record should be kept of the employee undergoing treatment, although, if you have a medical department they will keep medical records.

If a drug problem re-occurs either during treatment or later, then each case should be assessed on its merits. It is possible that further treatment could be offered but this is increasingly unlikely to be effective.