

## **ALCOHOL AND DRUG MISUSE**

### **1.0 DEFINITION AND NATURE OF MISUSE**

Alcohol or drug misuse occurs when people persistently and regularly resort to drinking or drug taking to cope with the everyday demands of life. The unique problems caused by misuse often mean that they will go to great lengths to conceal or deny the existence of the problem and may well refuse offers of help and treatment.

### **2.0 EXTENT OF POLICY**

This policy applies to all employees. The policy does not detract from normal disciplinary measures for misconduct or poor job performance. It also does not extend to the employee who through excessive consumption of alcohol or experimentation with drugs on random occasions behaves in a manner contrary to the normal standards of safety and conduct expected by Poole Housing Partnership Limited. Such events will be dealt with under normal disciplinary procedures. All employees who are taking prescribed drugs that may affect his / her ability to perform his / her duties efficiently, safely and effectively, must inform their manager.

### **3.0 MANAGER'S OBLIGATIONS**

Management will encourage staff to seek assistance at the earliest possible time in order to increase the prospect of treatment being successful. Confidentiality is considered to be of the utmost importance to successful treatment and staff should be assured of this at all times to encourage them to accept help.

### **4.0 TREATMENT**

Where employees are identified as having a drug or alcohol misuse problem Poole Housing Partnership Limited will actively encourage them to follow the treatment prescribed. If this requires a period of absence the employee will be encouraged to self-certify for sick leave purposes or to obtain a doctor's certificate.

### **5.0 ACCEPTANCE OF TREATMENT**

Where misconduct or poor performance is related to drug or alcohol misuse, the member of staff must accept a referral for help in order to be protected by this policy. If disciplinary proceedings have begun and it then becomes accepted that a misuse problem is the likely cause, disciplinary action can generally be suspended on condition that a referral for treatment is accepted and pursued. The disciplinary action may be recommenced if offers of treatment/support are declined or if the treatment programme is not adhered to.

As with any illness, consideration may be given at the appropriate time to the termination of employment on grounds of ill health.

## **6.0 RETURNING TO WORK**

Every effort will be made to ensure that the member of staff is able to return to the same post/job following treatment unless resumption of that job would lead to a serious risk of undermining a satisfactory recovery. In that event consideration will be given to suitable re-deployment where available. If, following treatment, a relapse occurs a further opportunity to accept another treatment programme may be agreed but this will depend on individual circumstances.

## **7.0 TRAINING AND EDUCATION**

Poole Housing Partnership Limited will from time to time create opportunities for staff to become more aware of problems caused by alcohol and drug misuse. It will also promote awareness of sensible limits of alcohol consumption within a wider promotion of healthy living, to highlight the causes of misuse and in particular, the relationship between alcohol, drug misuse and stress. Through education and normal supervision, all staff will be helped and encouraged to recognise their personal responsibilities as contained under the Health and Safety at Work Act.

## **8.0 PROCEDURES**

Where a manager believes that staff may have a problem relating to alcohol or drug misuse they should discuss this in confidence and in private with that individual. The discussion should be linked to concerns about poor performance, misconduct or unacceptable behaviour, and the individual should be encouraged to discuss the problem with the Head of HR & OD with a view to receiving treatment from an appropriate source - see 'Notes For Managers' on page 7).

Where appropriate and after liaison with Poole Housing Partnership Limited's Medical Advisor, the Head of HR & OD can introduce the individual to sources of specialist treatment and advice and will monitor future progress to ensure a successful outcome.

Individual members of staff who are concerned and aware that they have or may be developing a problem should make direct personal contact with the Head of HR & OD, in complete confidence, with a view to obtaining specialist advice, help and treatment.

If treatment programmes are not adhered to or are unsuccessful, consideration will be given to termination of employment if work performance falls short of acceptable standards or if behaviour continues to be disruptive

and unacceptable. However, this will occur only after every reasonable effort has been made to ensure a successful recovery.

Alcohol and Drug misuse are worrying problems for us all and people with concerns should not hesitate to approach the Head of HR & OD in complete confidence.

## **9.0 HOW TO RECOGNISE A PROBLEM**

The following problems are potential manifestations of alcohol or drug misuse:

### **9.1 Absenteeism**

- Multiple instances of unauthorised leave.
- Excessive sick leave.
- Frequent Monday and Friday absences.
- Excessive lateness in mornings and following breaks.
- Leaving work early on a regular basis.
- Peculiar and improbable excuses for absences.

### **9.2 High accident rate**

- Frequent accidents at work.
- Accidents at home, travelling to and from work.

### **9.3 Difficulty in concentration**

- Work requires greater effort than previously.
- Tasks take more time than might be reasonably expected.

### **9.4 Spasmodic work patterns**

- Alternative periods of high and low productivity and performance.
- Increasing general unreliability and unpredictability.
- Repeated absences from post/work place – more than the job requires.
- Frequent visits to cloakroom etc.
- Over long breaks.

### **9.5 Confusion**

- Difficulty in recalling instructions, details etc.
- Increasing difficulty in handling complex work.

### **9.6 Personal Presentation at Work**

- Coming to work in an inebriated condition.
- Smelling of alcohol.
- Hand tremors.

- Unkept appearance/lack of hygiene.

### **9.7 Deteriorating Efficiency**

- Missed deadlines/appointments.
- Mistakes due to inattention or poor judgement.
- Wasting materials, supplies etc.
- Making poor decisions.
- Improbable excuses for poor work performance.

### **9.8 Poor Relationships at Work**

- Over-reaction to real or imagined criticism.
- Unreasonable resentments.
- Irritability.
- Complaints from colleagues.
- Borrowing money.
- Avoidance of line manager/supervisor.

Individuals should question their attitudes towards alcohol consumption and drugs, both those that are legally prescribed and those that are not. If you feel you have a problem act now and seek help in confidence. Employment and personal relationships should not be put at risk when there is help available.

### **10.0 POINTS TO REMEMBER**

- We must constantly be aware of the signs of problems developing amongst staff and take appropriate action as soon as a problem is suspected.
- Collusion and cover-up will not help the problem drinker or drug taker in the long run. Any cover up which leads to an accident can be viewed as management failure. The company could be considered partly to blame for any accident caused by an employee.
- Ignoring a problem will not make it go away.
- Taking the wrong action can be as damaging as taking no action, so it is important to remember or refer to the above notes.

## NOTES FOR MANAGERS

Poole Housing Partnership Limited expects all levels of management to be aware of the policy on alcohol and drug misuse and to implement it with care, consideration and sensitivity. It does not expect you to become an expert, nor to become a social worker or psychotherapist, but it does wish you to:

- Be alert to the possibility of alcohol or drug problems amongst members of your staff.
- Be able to recognise the signs and symptoms of such problems.
- Direct and encourage staff towards professional help as soon as the problem is recognised.
- Dealing with alcohol and drug misuse is always a delicate matter, but it can be made easier if the following action is taken:
- Keep an accurate note of the work errors of the employee concerned, his/her absences, late arrivals, etc.
- Arrange to see him/her in private and at a time when he/she can be expected not to be under the influence of alcohol or drugs. Try to make sure you remain undisturbed or interrupted.
- At the meeting start by establishing the reasons for the discussion, making it clear that a record has been kept of his/her performance and that it is not satisfactory.
- Restrict discussion to the issues concerning work attitude and performance. Do not accuse the employee of having a problem with drugs or alcohol.
- Remain detached and calm, but be firm. Try to establish agreement with the employee that problems exist with his/her work and that these problems must be dealt with.
- Ask the employee concerned for his/her view of the problems, their nature and the causes. Mention that you have become aware that he/she is drinking rather more than usual or that behaviour has changed and ask if he/she feels that the alcohol or drugs might be affecting performance at work. Try to establish if there is any reason for him/her to be under stress.
- Ensure that the employee knows that there is a policy on alcohol and drug misuse and offer the protection that it gives if it seems appropriate. Emphasise that the policy is intended to help overcome problems and is offered in complete confidence.
- End the interview with agreement on specific actions:
- A referral within the policy.
- An understanding of what aspect of work or attitude has to improve.
- An understanding of what you will do next.